No. 5
JOHN STREET

No. 5
JOHN STREET

BY
RICHARD WHITEING
Author of "The Island"

PUBLISHED BY THE CENTURY CO.
NEW YORK : 1899

Copyright, 1899,
By THE CENTURY CO.

THE DE VINNE PRESS.

BOOK I

No. 5 JOHN STREET

I

NO. 5 JOHN STREET is a four-storied hovel, in the very heart of a slum which lies between two of the finest thoroughfares of the West End. I have come here, in this year of Diamond Jubilee, to learn what it is to live on half a crown a day, and to earn it. My scheme is not so high as a pleasure, nor quite so mean as a fad.

This is how it came about:

Shortly before his death, my poor friend Lord —— communicated to me a strange adventure he had in the South Seas. In point of fact, the secret did not become mine until, in a sense, it was everybody's. Yet this did no disloyalty to me as, usually, the sole sharer of his more intimate thoughts. I learned from him his identity with a person of quality whose memoir of travel, "The Island," had been prepared for the press by another hand. Thus the public had no clue to the real authorship, which was the very essence of the secret.

No. 5 John Street

It was a most uncommon experience. Perplexed with the shows of things around him, especially as seen from the standpoint of his rank and position, my friend had receded ever farther and farther from that standpoint, in the hope of getting human society into focus. He was the victim of one of the most serious maladies of the time, hereafter, perhaps, to be known as the impossibility of telling what the deuce it all means. It had first attacked him as he stood one day on the steps of the Royal Exchange and looked down upon the amazing checker-board of wealth and poverty, abjectness, and the pride of life at his feet. Ever receding from that scene in terror, no less than in the hope of bringing it into proportion, he had finally lost sight of it altogether by backing to the other side of the world. Here a fortunate misadventure in an open boat on the Pacific had landed him on a speck of coral island in the waste of waters which was scarcely bigger than Kensington Gardens in a partnership of superficial area with Hyde Park. It was inhabited by a mixed race, Tahitian on the mother's side, that knew nothing of the land of its fathers, except by report of British greatness in the moral as in the material, domain. It was "run" on principles of almost primitive Christianity, by a handful of men and women who took some of their exercise in feats of mountaineering among its almost inaccessible peaks, and the rest in public worship. It was governed by a rather ridiculous old person of their own stamp, and administered under a code of laws written in his pocket-book. He was a fine specimen of hundreds of our countrymen

who live under the flag, more or less as hermits, in waste places of the earth. In rare cases they form a population of one soul; in all, no matter what the number of their associates, they exhibit something of the majesty of the Roman legionary astray among the Dacians of the frontier. My friend sojourned with the islanders for some time, and then left them, with the conviction that in their simplicity, their innocence, and their belief that the search after goodness was the true business of life, and consequently the chief aim of British policy, he had found his optical secret at last, and might hope to get our own social scene into focus on his return.

He came back to London with the highest hopes; but alas! they were cut short by his untimely death. I have always thought that this event had a moral as well as a physical cause, and that, to use the jargon of athletics, my friend had over-trained his spirit for the race of life, and grown stale. On this point, it only remains to add in bare mention that the aged governor of the island had a daughter, a beautiful creature with a mind like the crystal depths of her own seas, and a shape, developed by sun, sea, air, and daily feats of daring, which suggested a Venus of Milo restored by the hand of God. But of the more sacred subject of the dead man's relations with her it does not become me to speak in detail.

As one of his executors, it fell to my lot to examine his letters and papers. Among these I found an earnest entreaty from the governor that my friend would consent to represent the little community at the

approaching Jubilee of the Queen. The settlers had heard of that world-wide event from one of the passing ships of commerce or of war that look in to cheer their solitude in the course of the year. They desired to testify their patriotic joy, and to do something in acquittal of their huge debt to England for moral example, and for the numerous presents of hymn-books and sewing-machines which she had sent them as grants in aid. They had accordingly risen to the ambition of an agent-general for the Jubilee; and the governor's letter, written on a sheet of rather grimy note-paper, commissioned my late friend to the office!

I wrote to tell his Excellency of what had happened; and since my friend had always spoken of these people with touching attachment and devotion, and had said that he desired to be of use to them, I expressed my readiness to become his substitute.

A sheet of somewhat cleaner paper, edged in black by hand, with the aid of a ruler, brought me the governor's reply. My offer was accepted with many expressions of gratitude, and in due course I had the high honor of receiving my commission as agent-general of the island, and special envoy for the Jubilee of Queen Victoria. I was instructed to signify his Excellency's regret that he could not himself figure in the ceremony among the colonial premiers. He was so anxious, it seemed, to prevent disappointment, that he had written before the receipt of the invitation. My commission was a wide one. I was not only to attend the ceremony in my representative capacity, but to report on the laws, customs, institutions, and

manners of the mother country, for the edification of the islanders. Their aim was the imitation of England; and my deceased friend had prepared me for the expression of their belief that in this lay their royal road to the higher civilization. As he once observed, "England is their great archetype of power, wisdom, and beauty of life. Needless to say, they have not seen it; I mean, of course, that circumstance has bound them to their rock. All that they know as best comes from England—from the great war-ship, which they regard with almost the wonder of Indians, down to the harmonium in the cottage. It is not much to know; but a generous imagination easily does the rest."

It was, of course, a purely honorary appointment; but his Excellency assured me, under his sign manual, that anything in the nature of legitimate expenses, within the limits of a pound sterling—twenty shillings—should be made good to me by a consignment in the island currency of yams.

I was at first received with some misgiving at the Colonial Office, owing to their difficulty in finding the pigeonhole of the papers relating to the affairs of the island. One of the officials cheered me with the assurance that he had heard of the place, though he would not commit himself to any more precise statement. His inquiry as to whether it was not an uninhabited rock in the ocean, leased to a Scotchman for the collection of guano, showed that he really had but little information to impart. I therefore declined his obliging offer to look for it in the receipts under the name

of MacTavish. At length he confessed that the clerk in charge of the smaller possessions was absent on sick-leave, and that there was little to be done until his return. I awaited this gentleman's recovery only to learn that another clerk, who really did know something about it, had been all the while on the premises, in a back room. This one, at our first interview, unrolled a map on the wall, and unhesitatingly directed a swooping forefinger to the settlement, without the aid of a magnifying-glass. Thanks to his good offices, I finally obtained the promise of facilities for the presentation of the address. As to the rest, the imperial government met me, in an exceedingly liberal spirit, with the offer of a seat on the western line of the procession, at trade price.

It was still some time in advance of Jubilee day; and having nothing in the world to do, I thought I could not better employ the time than in preparing the report on manners and customs at once. The account of the festival could then be added, and the thing would be done. For the manners and customs of my own order I could easily answer without preparation. But what was I to do about the others? A sense of responsibility to my commission showed me that I ought to tell the islanders something of the life of that section which has been so happily described as "the other half." But alas! I was as ignorant of it as my employers themselves.

In a sort of wild rush for light, I procured an invitation to a conference at the Mansion House on the social question, but, I am bound to say, not with

the expected results. We were a hundred and fifty or so in the room, all talking about the poor man. The Charity Organization Society was in attendance; a bishop was on the platform; a colonial governor was on his legs; many meek and saintly women were scattered about, with some who had, evidently, taken the meeting between two afternoon calls. We talked about the poor man—oh, how we talked about him! And though he was not there, we talked at him, too, by mere force of habit. Some were for doing useful things with him in the colonies, others for keeping him at home in labor settlements and under lock and key. Others, again, had a scheme by which, with strict frugality, temperance, and self-denial, he might save just £4 13*s.* 7*d.* a year—a sum that in twenty years or so might yield enough to supply him with an annuity of £9 5*s.* for his old age. We talked till there was barely time to run home and dress for dinner. Then, with a hasty vote of thanks to the chairman, we poured out into the street, where the carriages were drawn up in line.

As I bounded along in a hansom, it struck me, in the flash of a happy thought, that I, for one, had talked and heard talk enough, and that it was time to go and see. I don't believe you can address yourself to these problems from the standpoint of ten thousand pounds a year. The box at the opera, the shooting, and the places of settlement in three counties, obscure the view. I thought I should like to come a little nearer to realities; I knew I was tired of reports.

II

IN a week from that time I was in residence, in a third floor back, in the slum.

I had been invited to join a university settlement at the East End. I went down to look at it, but it proved to be a mere peep-hole into the life I wanted to see, with the Peeping Tom still a little too much on the safe side. The inmate did not live the life. He observed it merely from the standpoint of all the comforts of home. And if he sometimes plunged into the waters of tribulation, it was only in corks.

Now, the essence of my plan was that I should, for a certain time of probation, get my own living with my own hands. I not only wished to report with knowledge, but I was most eager to see what I was worth in the market. I therefore put myself under heavy bonds to Honor to find a job, and to make it keep me—say for six weeks. During that period, no matter what the hardship or what the temptation, I would make my own earnings serve, and would school myself to the same compulsory indifference to my supports as a Black Prince at Cressy. After all, it was a great saving of time as compared with the earlier

methods. The full term of the old Egyptian pilgrimage of the soul through the lower world was three thousand years. Could we have a more striking example of the improvements in rapidity of transit which are the glory of the age? It was a freak, if you like; but so is duck-shooting on the Caspian—in which sport I was supposed to be engaged, by way of accounting for my absence from town at the opening of the season. It was given out that I had crossed Europe and a part of Asia to slay wild fowl. No one, I knew, would laugh at that, whereas every one would have laughed at the quixotism of my real enterprise. Yet this was not quixotic at all; it was prompted by a deep sense of duty to my employers, as agent-general of a colony. To know what life at half a crown a day is like, one ought to have nothing but the half-crown. This was impossible in its full perfection in my case, but I felt that, with a little self-control and management, it would be quite easy to have no more for a time. A poor rich fellow, sure of his election to the heaven of Piccadilly in six weeks, could but do his best. One thing was clear: if I played my play honestly, I should obtain some material for the report, while a whole lifetime of meetings at the Mansion House could give me none. After my probation, I might hope to rise to great things at that institution —perhaps to a seat by the chair. Meanwhile, the motto was, "Fair play, and the rigor of the game."

I therefore found a situation in a factory as copyist and minor clerk. The place was less than a mile from my customary haunts, as the crow flies; yet, in the

reckoning of life and habits and ways of thought, it was as remote from them as Africa. It was but an odd job, with no hope of a permanency. They were looking forward to a temporary pressure of work, and were taking on a few extra hands. I was to copy things out of a book, or into a book—I hardly knew which, and I did not care, so long as it meant eighteen shillings a week, which sum being divided by seven, will, I think, be found to yield a trifle over the half-crown for each day. So on one particularly fine morning, my faithful man Stubbs being alone in the secret, I walked out of my rooms in St. James's, with little more than the old suit I stood upright in, and went straight to a third floor back at No. 5 John street. "Ring three times, please, and sing out 'Chawley' at the foot of the stairs."

I was brought there by a good fellow whom I met at the factory, a laborer, and, like myself, an odd hand. He had a close crop of light hair; and this, somehow, added to the promise of strength in his chest and arms, in his small, round head, and in what I should call his fighting face. There was good humor, withal, in the twinkling eyes.

As I left the office, on the understanding of my engagement for the following week, my first care, of course, was to find a lodging. Just then my eye fell on this pocket Hercules, who was in close conflict with a heavy bale of goods, and I ventured to submit the difficulty to his friendly counsel.

Our alphabet, I regret to say, is not rich enough for the notation of his cockney dialect. This is no more

to be written phonetically than a foreign tongue. I can but indicate his speech system, from time to time, by a stray word, which, if there is anything in the theory of the correspondence between sounds and colors, should have the effect of a stain of London mud. It is as much as I can promise, and, as I hope, my reader will endure. Yet, as I afterward learned, he had been educated by his country at a public school. The poor fellow had become an out-patient of that institution with this sort of congenital nasty taste in his mouth, and he had been discharged without a cure.

"Wait for me at the cawnah to-night," he said, "when we knocks awf."

"What rent kin yer affawd?" was his first question, when we resumed the conference, as by appointment.

"Three shillings a week, at the outside."

"'Ave yer got any sticks?"

I was in no doubt as to his meaning. There is a cheering approach to the union of classes in the way in which the extremes of society sometimes meet in their abuse of the mother tongue.

"None," I replied, "but I want to buy some."

"Well, there 's a model near where I lives, if yer care for that sort o' thing."

"Where do you live?"

"John street."

"Show me."

"I could drink a pint fust," he said.

It was his modest fee for agency, and I readily gave it to him. We had to enter a gin palace for the purpose. The fittings were superb; the smell was not in

keeping. He blew off the froth, drank, and offered the pewter to me. I knew of this custom, of course, for I had seen the hostlers drink a thousand times; yet it sickened me somewhat, in my new quality of partaker. What of that? The important thing was, I had found a friend.

"There 's the model," he said, as we pursued our way, and passed a vast towering packing-case for humanity, pierced for miasmatic air and uncertain light. "Some likes 'em. I don't. That 's my drum, two doors beyond."

His "drum" was better to look at. The whole thoroughfare, evidently, had once been a haunt of Jacobean fashion. This house was one of the few left of the first foundation. It was three floors high, had three windows to a floor, and the promise of large front rooms. Externally it was in a state of indescribable dirt, squalor, and decay. The other houses, some of which were more modern, but less substantial, matched it in this respect. So did the model dwelling as to the outer filth. I should greatly have preferred a cleaner street, but my inexperience was altogether against me. I knew nothing of management, nor of ways and means. Besides, I seemed to yearn for a neighbor. There was a back room vacant at No. 5, on the same uppermost landing as my friend's. I took it. It was soon furnished, with his good help.

On this Saturday afternoon I have moved in. On Monday I go to work. Letters and messages from what is now my outer world are to reach me through Stubbs, who, as I have said, is the sole depositary of

my secret. He is supposed to put them in train for Central Asia: he sends them to John street. It will be remembered that the only difference in the effective distance is in point of time.

The report will, of course, demand special treatment; but as I go on, I may as well make a few rough notes of general experience, by way of feeling my own pulse. I have always admired that man of science who carefully recorded his progress in suffocation, when he hoped he was going to perish in a mine. These jottings may be useful, one day, to the same kindly hand that put my poor friend's papers into shape for the press.

III

AND now to business. I go to work on Monday morning, first thing. In at seven means up at six. It shall be so; but how make sure of waking in time? My friendly guide is taken into consultation. There is, it seems, a professional caller-up in the building, who raps at doors at appointed hours in the early morning, or in the dead of night, at a penny a rap paid in advance. I enter my name on his books.

My budget? Next Saturday is pay-day—a long perspective of a whole week. How much have I in hand to stead me between this and then? Just one pound two—a trifle more, then, than the week's pay. In luck again! My friend, I can see, thinks that "for them as can stand" steady labor the regular eighteen shillings a week is affluence. It is the "always there when you want it" style of the thing, he says, that tickles him. This friend, by the way, one must learn to know by a name. I make the necessary approaches. "Call me the 'Cove,' he says; "that 's what they calls me abaht here. 'Covey' is the way some on 'em puts it, when they 're pals. That 'll do for me, if it 'll do for you. I 'm 'Covey' with the gal down-stairs—'Low

Covey' when she 's wild; it 's all the syme." We fix it, then, at "Covey," with the mental reservation, on my part, that it may at any moment be shortened to "Cove" if we have words. At the same time, "Low Covey" seems best to serve the uses of reference.

To the budget, then. Rent, two shillings sixpence a week; coal and candle, sixpence—conjecturally, I admit, but it must be so at first; washing and attendance, two shillings sixpence. I had some difficulty with Low Covey over this item, and he passes it with reluctance. He does his own washing—when it is done. The "attendance" he positively cannot understand. He makes his own bed,—"reg'lar every Saturday,"—and what else is there to do? I explain that one must draw the line somewhere. He says that he begins to fancy I must be a sort of "toff." He yields finally to the joy of dispensing patronage, and introduces me to a weather-beaten woman in the front parlor who will be glad of the money. She is to come in every day and tidy up, and, as she phrases it, wash me by the week, for the sum named. There is a secret clause in the treaty as to the amount of washing, and I may have to come to dickies in my old age. The food I set down at one shilling sixpence a day for six days of the week, and sixpence on the seventh—in this instance Saturday. It is, as Low Covey explains, a sort of compensatory or dog-watch day.

"You mike do," he says, "and then you get your tuck-in, Sundays. Lord! give me a reg'lar sixpence every day for grub, and I warrant I 'd never starve."

"How should you manage it, then?"

"Cawfee and slice in the mornin'—three ha'pence. Dinner, two penn'orth o' block ornymint and a penn'orth o' bread."

Block ornaments, on explanation, turn out to be the absolutely indefinable remnants of meat offered in a miscellaneous heap at the common butchers' shops. I do not like the idea of block ornaments, and I will none of them. There is another plan much more scientific. I was once taught at a lecture that with lentils, the "red pottage" of Esau, an able-bodied man may live in abundance on forty shillings a year. Some say five shillings' worth will serve for the whole twelvemonth; but the higher figure covers emergencies, and, besides, admits of hospitality. There is everything in lentils, especially, I believe, in the variety known as "splits"—nitrogenous albuminoids, starch, and digestible fiber galore, with but an infinitesimal residue of indigestible ash. It is to be lentil soup, then, for the dog-watch day, with at least twopence saved on the estimate. How difficulties vanish when you tackle them! And what an historical solution is this—ancient Egypt and modern Babylon both nourished in the same way!

My miscellaneous expenditure—the little nothings—I fix at one shilling sixpence a week. This provides the match, the bundle of wood, the bit of soap, the evening paper, the omnibus, and even for the "deserving object of charity." We have still about one shilling sixpence left for revelry at the week's end. The "'arf-pint" of

friendship with Low Covey, the occasional Saturday night's music-hall as a compensation for Saturday morning's beans, with all else needful in the light of life, will come out of this.

The wages are spent; yet what about clothes? Were it not for the time limit of the adventure, there would be nothing for it, in the long run, but aprons of autumn leaves. And what for sickness and old age, in the same case? Query: Cut out the whole allowance for pleasure? Impossible, I think. Low Covey is for trusting to luck. "Coats come somehow. I've never bin without one, and never thought 'ow I was to git one, all my days. You worry too much, guv'nor. Put a bit on a 'orse, and if yer pull it orf, there 's a whole suit. As for sickness, there 's the 'orspital; but, mind yer, you 've got to bring your own bottles, and they 'll try to bounce yer into payin' for advice, if they can. As fer old age—short life and a merry one. Very few of us makes old bones. Don't you be afeard."

I am somewhat "afeard," though, for all that, when the reckoning is done. There comes athwart my spirit, in a rush, the dread of having but these few paltry shillings between me and absolute destitution in the event of any mischance. Never before have I known this sensation. Nothing to hypothecate but the very garments that cover my nakedness; and as for borrowing without security, I find that sixpence is the extreme limit of any possible accommodation of that kind. Low Covey has said that he can lend such sum at any

time to a pal, when he happens to have it in his pocket. He will feel obliged, however, by repayment in instalments of not less than twopence, after the second day.

I pass over that first day and first week at the factory, though it is a capital experience; else I could say something of the hideous cheerlessness of the place, of the rigor of its moral climate, which gives the effect of even physical chill. We are in at seven. At eight we troop out to breakfast, and are absorbed by innumerable small, dirty coffee-houses which lie furtively about the purlieus like insect-eating plants waiting for prey. Oh, the horror of them! Stiff-backed benches, each the party-wall of a hutch; tables stained with liquid food; an atmosphere of grilled herring and rancid bacon; a babel of orders: "Pint o' cawfee and slice"; "Pint and rasher"; "Call this a fresh hegg, missis?" "Look alive with that there tea." 'T is an unlovely life, this life of the poor—destitute of beauty far more than of mere bread and butter. A meal—what a function when served with art, if only with the art of cleanliness! Without that, what an act of sensuality! In this feeding-shed we all so manifestly eat to fill our bellies. We are as fiercely businesslike over it, as surly, as swine at the trough. We waste no words on each other in salutations. Nods are not uncommon among the more courteously disposed—you may nod and eat at the same time. I think of those breakfasts at ——; the sunlit room; the soft garden landscape beyond, as though wrought in mezzotint; the table, another landscape within, in sheen

of damask, glimmer and glitter of articles of service, and meadow-land of morning flowers; the people to match, Honoria as fresh as Aphrodite; all of us cleaned up for the business with morning devotions and with morning tub, our talk playing lightly over the whole surface of things, as we turn over the new leaf of life and hope for the new day. Immeasurably far is that world from me as I read of its doings through the grease-stains of the daily paper, now veritably, after half an hour's use in this medium, a daily rag.

At half-past eight "sharp" we troop back into the factory to the iron music of a bell, which seems to be ticking off the seconds between the adjustment of the nightcap and the fall of the drop. By rushing through the meal without looking to right or left we may win ten minutes for a smoke. The wisest are they who speak no word from first to last, but ever have their mouths full with either the provender or the pipe. As we pass the gate, we knock out the glowing ashes of our cutties against one of its posts. Bits of the refuse may still be smoked again, and a street-boy stands by to gather them up. He gleans as much, he tells me, as two ounces on some days, for we are hundreds strong; and this, cleansed by a process of his invention, he sells at half-price. It is his modest attempt at a new industry; and with this, and coppers for superfluous service in opening the doors of cabs, he keeps his superfluous self alive.

We are ticked off a list by a man in charge of the gate. The penal rigor of the rule seems to take the life out of us. There is no hypocritical pretense of

labor as joy. We are working out a life sentence of servitude incurred as persons of no account.

When my Corydon sits on a hill,
Making melody—
When my lovely one goes to her wheel,
Singing cheerily.

Ah, no more o' that—just now, and just here!

At one we troop forth again, to dine as we have breakfasted. This time there is the longer interval of an hour. The meal over, we lounge upright against the factory wall for the smoking, read the sporting news and the police reports, and talk murders and the odds. Thanks to journalistic enterprise, we are well supplied with aids to conversation of this sort. If a horse goes lame in his morning gallop in Yorkshire, we have news of it at once. Not that we care anything about the horses. It is only that the national sport is a national lottery for our purpose. Parliament may abolish the name, but we are not going to have it abolish the essential thing. The sporting lottery is our only hope of betterment. Hope springs eternal at the cry of "All the winners!" when the newsboys go round.

At two we troop back again, and the day is more than half done. At six we are free for good. We are not an organized industry, or we might have earlier and perhaps shorter toil. Nine and a half is our daily tale. Then it is home—to the three-pair back, and, I can safely say, delight without alloy. In the first place, I am master there. The solitude is

welcome after the overmuch companionship of the working-hours. The room meets every immediate need of the spirit in its cleanliness, its simplicity, its perfect adaptation of means to ends. All I want is here, and—almost more important—nothing I do not want. This last consideration introduces a new element of pleasure—taste. I have stumbled on it merely by accident, but that does not matter in the least. The entire freedom from superfluity is beauty on the negative side. Positive aspects are not wanting. Many a shilling have I paid in Bond street to see painted harmonies that are no whit better than these in my garret. The deal of the table and stool is in perfect harmony with the new-washed paint of the wainscot, still yellow with age, and with the well-scrubbed floor, where every knot in the wood has its uses in breaking the monotony of the surface effect. As for the shapes of things, they are good because they are quite honest in their adaptation of means to ends. The table and stool are, I believe, of the "washing" variety, and their four sloping outstretched legs make perfect geometrical forms. Really, as an idea, the whole thing would be worth the attention of the West End furniture-dealers. They might bring it out—of course with accessories of silver and of porcelain, to give a pretext for the overcharge—as a new "bachelor suite, monastic style."

Monastic style! That is exactly what I want to come to. I have at last some practical insight into the mystery of the truth that the right way to belong to yourself is to have as few possessions as possible of

other kinds. Merely to apprehend this while lolling on a stuffed couch, within reach of all the so-called appliances of civilization, is to have no clue to its meaning. St. Jerome's Paula, the good friend of a good man, could hardly cross the floor of her palace on the Aventine without some friendly hand to relieve her of the weight of the armor of gold tissue which was the tea-gown of her time. Reduce the claim of externals—this is the true spiritual tale of the tub, and mere cynicism is no part of its moral. Placed as I am now, to covet would be a torture of the damned. My sense of happiness is emphatically the science of doing without. I have furnished on the principle of those wise nomads who are ready, at a moment's notice, to gather all their traps on the back of a camel and fare whithersoever duty or pleasure calls. I can see even further possibilities of reduction, until I have absolutely no more about me than I can stow on a coster's barrow or on a four-wheeled cab. I will work out one day the "spiritual independence suite," in a couple of deal boxes packed with all the needful resources of civilization. Why, for instance, a dozen books, if you come to that? Why more than one, borrowed from the free library round the corner? You cannot read two at a time, and as for storage, read the one properly, and there it is, stored forever —inside. It is the senseless craving for "furniture and effects" that keeps us all slaves. Poor Bellamy, with his hunger for hangings of price, suites in all the timbers of the forest,—trumpery, in a word,—began as a man, but, I am full sure, is going to end as a stock-

jobber. Maurice sweats over parchments in the Temple, as the bond-slave of a house in Bryanston Square, when his true gift is the ingle corner of a cottage and the labors of the field. These misguided persons sweat themselves only; but how many another sweats his fellow-man for monstrous braveries of wear which hang as heavy on the shoulders of the wearer as a suit of mail?

So, by this present Saturday night, hard on Sunday morning, I have made a good start in the new life. I have had my first week at the factory, my wages are in my pocket, and I am now sitting by the open window just before turning in. It is a night of great beauty, and there are deep shadows and sharp reliefs of light, with the help of the shining moon. The old eighteenth-century house, with its ground-plan of three rooms to the floor in diminishing sizes, forms great masses of silvery white and black as it catches or misses the gleam from the sky. There are other houses like it, and other effects, on the farther side of the party-wall. It is as something from a play; and much dramatic action of the highest import might go on, with this for a background. I have learned two precious things, I think, in this one week. The little place is good as a discipline in truth and the realities, and even beautiful as a—

A sudden tumult in the back yard—a shriek of "Murder!" and evidently a shriek in good faith.

IV

IN an instant we are in wild, rushing tumult, in fierce hurry to and fro, to the accompaniment of cries and slamming doors. Thrust the point of your stick into an ant-hill and turn up one single piece of sod, and you have the effect—in all but the noise, imperceptible to our coarser sense. The whole house seems to live in every separate atom, like a cheese under the microscope. There is one exception, at least. I knock at my friend Low Covey's door, and rush in without waiting for an answer. His apartment resounds softly to a low, musical trill, produced by himself with the aid of a tube half sunk in a glass of water. He is practising a bird-call. It is exquisite in its liquid softness, and I could fain stop and listen but for the dreadful summons from below.

"What 's up now?" he asks, with something of the impatience of a prima donna disturbed in her scales.

"Did you hear that fearful cry?"

"Ah, I 'eerd somethink."

"There 's murder going on—a woman, I think."

"Dessay; it 's Sat'd'y night."

"I 'm going to see."

"S'pose so; you 're fresh to the place."

"Come on too, for God's sake!"

He withdraws the tube, wipes it carefully on his cuff, and lays it on the mantel-shelf.

"Oh, all right, then. I 'm on. You 'ook it dahn; I 'll be there soon 's you."

He is not the only self-possessed mite in the cheese. As I pass the second floor back, I see, through the chink of the half-opened door, a woman placidly eating a supper of what, I have reason to believe, is fried fish. A querulous wail of infancy, in a discord of many notes, is also wafted outward with the fumes of the meal.

The rush of wild figures, men, women, children, clad or half clad, is toward the upper back yard; for there are two yards, the lower like a dry well. We cross a kind of permanent drawbridge over the well, and there, in the full moonlight, stands a tall, powerful girl, with her back to the door of an outhouse that usurps half the yard. A little boy cowers at her feet against the door. Her arms are in the attitude of fight common in the sporting prints, and she holds them in very workmanlike fashion. In front of her stands a half-drunken sailorman, his face disfigured with a blood-streak, and his right hand slowly caressing a large, open-bladed pocket-knife with a gesture sickening to behold. As an accessory figure of this gruesome composition, yet still well in the center of it, is a faded-looking woman, whose whole person has an indescribable air of steamy dampness and melting away. She is as indeterminate in outline as an ill-

made pudding. Hers was evidently the shriek of alarm. Her eyes seem bulging out of her head with fear, and she has lost all sense of purpose in her actions. She still cries, "Murder! murder! murder!" with an automatic regularity suggestive of some new variety of a bank-holiday machine.

"Who 'it 'im?" cries the Amazon, answering some question from the crowd. "I 'it 'im; and I 'll 'it 'im ag'in if he touches the kid. I kin do 'im any d'y, and charnce it. Mike 'im put 'is knife down—thet 's all."

The knife! Yes; that is the capital fact of the situation. I know that in another moment it may be darted into the girl's side, finding the needful "purchase" of resistance in the hard surface of her stays. There is no mistaking the import of the man's devilish smile; yet I am perfectly well aware, at the same time, of many other details of the scene which, in this dire peril, ought to seem insignificant. At such moments, I suppose, the senses "bolt" impressions, good, bad, and indifferent, ever so much faster than the judgment can digest them. Thus I see that the girl is a flower-seller, and one of the most stalwart of the corps. Her basket lies in a corner, empty but for a few stalks. By its side, as though knocked off in a scuffle, is her helmet,—hat it is hardly to be called,—a huge structure of felt with nodding plumes. I am able to notice that one of the feathers droops at a sharp angle, where, perhaps, it has been broken by a fall. With that helmet on her brows she would look but little shorter than a Life Guardsman. Without it she is manifestly of splendid build. Her gown, torn

open in the scuffle, exposes the heaving breast. Her black hair streams over her shoulders. Her sleeves are turned up to the elbows for battle. One stout fist is streaked with the blood of the man with the knife. The lips are parted with her quick breathing; the flashing eyes outshine the moonlight. A touch of imagination would convert her into some well-preserved fragment of a bas-relief exhibiting Antiope on the war-path. To complete this idea of the statuesque, the little ragged boy crouching at her feet makes a triangular base for the composition. As an Antiope of the slums, she carries no weapon but nature's. Her right arm lies across her chest; her left moves steadily to and fro for delivery; her eyes follow every motion of the wretch with the knife, as she waits to catch him on the spring. I, too, watch him, and within his distance, until, in another moment, we are both saved all further trouble on that score. Low Covey has hitherto followed me with lagging foot; but on catching sight of the girl, he takes the drawbridge at a bound, with the exclamation, "Oh, it 's a pal!" Without another word, he fells the sailorman with a blow on the jaw, so swift, and sure, and unforeseen that the fellow falls quite senseless, and his fingers relax their hold on the knife. Low Covey pockets the weapon of the vanquished as spoil of war, drags him out of the throng, loosens his neck-cloth, lays him with a certain tenderness of touch against the wall, and having, as he puts it, "mide 'im comf'tabl'," turns with a look of inquiry to the girl. She, however, speaks no word, but drops her now nerveless arms, and, leaning against the door

of the shed, closes her eyes. The babble of the yard, suspended during the crisis of the scene, now breaks forth again, and explains all. The sailorman was groping his way to a subterranean, with the moist-looking woman of the murder shriek for guide, when he stumbled over the child, asleep in an angle of the stairs.

"There 's alwize a kid on them stires," explains one of the voices, "and there alwize will be, till they puts a lamp up, and leaves off leavin' the street door on the jar. They comes in when they ain't got no lodgin' money for the fourpennies, pore little things."

The sailorman was angered, and kicked the child. The moist woman remonstrated, got a blow for her pains, and brought worse punishment on the innocent cause of the disturbance. The sailorman was for dragging the child into the yard and beating him there at his leisure, when the street door opened once more to admit the flower-girl coming home from her day's work. She darted forward, and struck the man full in the face. The moist woman set up her shriek to the universe. The rest is told.

By this time the heroine of the adventure has gathered up her "things," including the dreadful helmet, and she seems to have perfectly recovered her belligerent and defiant self.

"My kid!" she cries fiercely, in answer to another question. "He 's no kid o' mine. I ain't got such a thing."

"He don't look as if he was inybody's kid," says another. "Never had no mother, I should say. Speak up, Tommy; what 's yer name?"

At this the flower-girl turns and looks down at the urchin, where he crouches still at her feet, as though settling himself once more to lawless sleep. His claim against society, nature, God—call it what you will—seems stupendous. He lacks everything—clothing, flesh to hang it on, all the amenities, presumptively, down to the A B C. He wears a shirt torn at the shoulder, and a pair of trousers which are but a picturesque ruin—just these and no more. A ridiculous fag-end of the shirt, itself a shred, sticks tailwise out behind through one of the rents. He is shoeless, capless, uncombed, and, even in this light, manifestly very dirty. With the dirt on his face there is a tiny dried-up rivulet of blood. At sight of the blood the flower-girl catches him up in her arms, and all the Amazon vanishes as she bursts into pitying tears. She holds him to her fine, firm-lined bosom, calls him "pore lamb," and makes awkward, untrained attempts to dress the cut by wiping it with the corner of her apron. He resists. The strong hand seems to hurt him, and to confirm a wild, nomad terror of human touch, which he has found invariably harmful. She sets him down, and enters the house to fetch water for his wound. When she returns with that, and with a huge slice of bread and butter, he is nowhere to be seen. He had followed her, as we thought, to her room, but really only to steal away to the unconditioned freedom of the street by the ever-open door.

The woman of the murder shriek has vanished, too. The water comes in handy for the revival of the mariner. Low Covey lifts the still insensible patient's

head, which yields with a facility sickeningly suggestive of dislocation of the neck. Presently he shows signs of returning life, and is, in due course, on his legs, and staring absently at the company. His expression changes to a scowl as he recovers fuller consciousness, and seems to realize himself in a sort of habitual hatred of his kind. Then he, too, finally lets the street door swing behind him, and disappears from that scene, and from this story.

The door of the wooden shed in the yard, after which the battle ought to be named in history, closes on a doorkeeper returning to his post behind it. As it opened to receive him, the swinging light within afforded a glimpse of a number of belated devotees slowly settling down by the knees to a resumption of prayer, like so many camels waiting to be eased of their loads. The back premises at No. 5 John street will soon be left to moonlight and to me.

Yet not quite so soon as I think. We still linger to exchange views. This curious house! Who would have thought one had so many neighbors? It is a colony, tier upon tier. I see the figures, in various stages of undress, still haunting the back windows, as though loath to leave the entertainment while there may yet be a parting scuffle or a parting groan. There is a patriarchal head at the first floor; and a patriarchal fist there threatens a mob of infants at the adjacent window to drive them back to bed. Such a head, I have no doubt, was often seen on the plain of Shinar. The hooked nose, the mass of spiral locks, the flowing beard, seem unchanged. In that respect,

only time and space separate John street from Chaldea.

The premises have yet to quiet down. A querulous barking and yelping still comes from the end of the yard. Unnoticed during the rumpus, except as an accompaniment in a minor key, it is now a distinct offense to the ear. I trace it to its source in a moldy greenhouse, once, no doubt, the pleasance of the mansion, when the place was inhabited by persons of dignity and note. The kindly moonlight, streaming through the roof, shows me a domestic menagerie and a dissolute-looking man within. He seems to be engaged in flicking the inhabitants into peace with a towel, or, when that fails, in smoking them into stupefaction from a short pipe. Dogs of many breeds dodge his blows, barking or yelping still. Rabbits jerk to and fro in their hutches—mere troubled specks of color, as their markings catch or lose the light. Contrasting effects of twinkling whiteness in smaller cages are probably toy mice in a scare. Sea-green pigeons roost above on shelves which once held flowers.

Next to this den, and nearer to the main building, is another shed, which faces the unexpected house of prayer. The doorway of this abode has been occupied all through the adventure by a strange-looking figure, pen in hand and spectacles on nose, as though the spirit within were given to the labors of literature. It is the figure of an old man. He is very slovenly, and I should say that under a search-light he would prove to be dirty as well; but in this subduing beam you have to take all but the darkest stains on

trust. He has merely watched the incident during its actual progress, but now that it is past, he seems ready with its moral. He straightens himself as for an oration, and in a husky, cavernous voice observes: "The cursed aristocracy—blast 'em!" But this oration is never to be finished. A tall, spare man of middle age, clad in black, emerges from the depths of the hut, lays a softly compelling hand upon the orator, and enjoins silence with the words: "Come in, old fool." They are quite gently spoken, in a foreign accent, by one who has what I can describe only as a look of superiority. The speaker seems something of a personage by virtue of his air of melancholy,—which seems to have no origin in petty cares,—his high brow, his well-cut features, and especially of what we are able to see by this faint light as to the expression of his eyes. "Come in, old fool," he repeats tenderly; and the door closes on the pair.

It is bedtime. Two or three sleek young men, who look soft-spoken as well, seem to be aware of it, and they move indoors. They have been in the yard from the first, but, to their credit as men of peace, they have preserved an absolute neutrality between the contending parties. If the knife had reached its mark, I feel sure they would have slunk off as decorously as they slink off now. Yet they seem to know one of the crowd, for the quietest of them sought to exchange glances with the moist woman when her assailant was felled. They now file off with her, as though to their respective shares of cave-dwellings. One of them, indeed, speaks at last, though still in the

tone of perfect discretion that marks their whole demeanor. He seems to rebuke a truculent-looking boy who likewise is going down-stairs; and these are his temperate words: "You ain't got no business here."

"Mind your own bloomin' business, or I 'll give yer a shove in the eye," is the answer of the boy.

The young man minds his business, accordingly, by rounding his shoulders as under a burden of self-imposed silence, and, with his friends, is quickly lost to view.

"Now, Mammy," cries the Amazon to an old woman whom I recognize as my bedmaker, "you jest go indoors; you 'll ketch your death o' cold 'ere."

This heralds the departure of the central group, formed by the heroine of the adventure and two admiring bottle-holders of her own sex. The one addressed looks up at her with an expression of anxiety; the other, a mere girl, eyes her with pride and trust. The girl presents in her appearance the same problem as certain insects. How can there be room for a complete apparatus of organs within her narrow chest and narrower waist?

The Amazon leads the aged one into the house and to the door of the front parlor. The three women evidently lodge on the same floor, the strongest, as though in support, in the middle room, with a feeble sister on either side. Hers is the first back parlor, and beyond it there is a second, which must be the home of the one with the merely conjectural inside. The old woman cannot leave without offering

to the champion her sex's universal restorative or panacea:

"You jest come inside, my dear, and you shall have a nice cup of tea."

"Git out with yer; I don't want no blessid tea." (It is our way of declining offers in John street.) "Got any sweet stuff, Nance?"

"Yes, you darlin'," cries the other girl, in answer. Then, vanishing, she returns in a moment with a packet of mixed confectionery, which is manifestly of the heroic age of human digestion, and which is labeled "Surprise."

The Amazon munches two or three morsels with the relish of a child, and in the pause her eye falls on my companion, who has been the last to leave the yard.

"Thank yer, Covey, for fetchin' 'im that one on the jore. I thought I was done."

"Oh, it 's all right," says Low Covey, modestly. "There war n't no time to square up to 'im, when I see the sticker in 'is 'and."

And munching still, she retires, with the giver of the feast, by their common door.

As we mount to our lodgings under the roof, we overtake an old man toiling upward beneath the weight of a huge cylinder in an oil-cloth case and of a tripod stand.

"'Ad a good catch, old man?" asks Low Covey, as he gently relieves him of his entire burden with one hand.

"Pretty fair," says the man, with a harshness of voice that seems to betoken rust in the organ. "Thank

yer, and good night," is all the rest we hear, as he takes back his cylinder at the door of his own room, which lies between the two occupied by ourselves.

"Who 's that?"

"That 's Holy Joe, the old cove as calls you up in the mornin'. He does a bit at night in the streets with 'is telescope, showin' the stars—astrolyger by trade. All self-taught. Made the machine hisself, too."

"He seems a quiet neighbor."

"Yes. He would n't be a bad sort, if he 'd only enj'y hisself. But he won't. Never takes a pint; never says nothing; just keeps hisself to hisself. Seems to 'ave all 'is pals up in the sky."

Funny sort of people! Rather unpromising for the report!

V

A CALL from Low Covey. He is in shirt-sleeves and one brace. Such, I should judge, is the extreme rigor of fashion here for Sunday morning. To my surprise, he makes absolutely no allusion to the scene of last night. I, naturally, want to talk about it. He is not averse, but he does not seem to know that there is anything to talk about. "It was Sat'd'y night, you know," he says. "Things offin gits a bit lively on Sat'd'y night." His preference in topics, I should judge, is for bird-calls, as for something that suggests the arts and the graces of life. But finally, in condescension to my ignorant wonder, he brings his mind to the subject of my choice.

"Larf!" he says genially; "I thought I should ha' bu'st when I heerd that old cure lettin' out at the aristocracy, arter I had floored the bloke. That sailor chap war n't no aristocracy, no more than you or me, barrin', p'r'aps, the pound or two he 'ad in 'is pocket."

"Who is the—the 'old cure'?"

"Blessed if I know. They calls him 'Old '48.' Sort o' republican—no kings or queens. Bill-poster when he kin git it to do. But a scholar, though; I will say

that. Alwize readin' and writin'. Preaches about in Hy' Par'. Brings out a paper all by hisself, so I 'm tould. Never done me no 'arm."

"And the tall man in black, who called him an old fool?"

"Fellow-lodger. Foreigner. Mr. Izreel, or some name o' that sort. One o' these 'ere anarchests—suthin' abaht blowin' people inside out, I 've heerd say. Commune, if you know what that means. I don't."

"Ah! Old '48 and Young '71; is that it?"

"Blessed if I know.

"My idea of the row," he continues, "is, it was all along o' that lot dahn-stairs. Rummy lot dahn there. The kitchins may be all right; can't say. Never bin there but once. It 's the cellars underneath 'em. Yer go dahn two flights. They ought to block up that secind staircase. Nobody lives there, and so, yer see, everybody lives there. People goes in an' out all day long—an' all night, too, when they got nowhere else to go to. Some on 'em 'ides things there. 'Tecs down, one day, from Scotland Yard to look for dynamit'. Did n't find none, but turned up a lot o' spoons—silver ones. But, mind yer, they ain't no class, them dirty little boys as runs in an' out there. Fancies theirselves burglars. Nothin' o' the sort—sneak-thieves."

"Thieves!"

"Oh, well," says Low Covey, correcting himself hastily, "I dunno."

"Who were those young fellows that one of the boys wanted to fight?"

"Ah, that 's another pair o' shoes. They lives in the front kitchin; but, yer see, none o' them makes no fuss. Quietest lodgers in the 'ouse. They 're regularly in the line, they are."

"What line?"

"Oh, I dunno. Never done no 'arm to me."

This is evidently his simple standard of toleration, as, I fancy, it is also the world's.

"And the woman?"

"Back kitchin. Pass the time o' day with 'er sometimes. No business o' mine."

"What a set!"

"Well, yer see, they lives dahn-stairs. Buried, like. I always think that makes a difference. Dahn-stairs ain't never no class in 'ouses o' this sort. It 's what 's above—that 's what yer must look at for the real style of a place. Suppose yer was to go dahn-stairs at St. Paul's or Wes'mi'ster Abbey, what would yer find? Dead uns. Same everywhere. Give the sun a charnce. You kin take my tip, there 's some very respectable people in this place. One on 'em, they say, could keep 'is carriage if he liked."

"What a swell!"

"It 's ol' Ikey, there on the fust floor. Got the whole floor to hisself—front, back, an' little room. Sort o' sweater by trade—in the fur line. You should see 'em goin' out o' Sat'd'y nights. Tiptop! Won't speak to nobody. Funks the place out sometimes, when they 're busy. I dunno which is wuss—'is furs or the chaps he brings in to dress 'em. Foreigners. Can't speak a word of Hinglish.

"When the wind and the sun are both workin' together," he resumes, after a pause, "an' the sun strikes Ikey fair, along with the chap in the back yard as keeps the live stock, I tell yer, you 'd be glad to put yer 'ead up the chimbley for a breath of air. It 's wuss, though, sometimes, when that chap takes 'is stock into the 'ouse in winter-time. Phew!"

"What about the sanitary inspectors?"

Low Covey smiles. "They ain't no good for this 'ouse. They dunno half the trades what 's goin' on; and of course it ain't nobody's business to tell 'em, unless there 's a row. Even then, what 's the use o' foulin' yer own nest? You see, if the baby-farm was to split on Ikey, he might split on the baby-farm."

"Great Scott! Where 's the baby-farm?"

"Second floor back. Why, you see it when you was comin' dahn last night. You might 'ave heerd it, too. Lord, what a baby you are yourself!

"But it ain't all fur and baby-farms in the place; don't you forgit it," he continues, in a tone of pride. "Did n't yer notice the flowers on 'Tilda's winder-sell? You can see 'em from your room."

"You see, I have n't yet noticed 'Tilda herself, so far as I know."

"Well, you seemed to stare pretty 'ard at 'er last night, any'ow, when she was standin' up for the kid."

"Why, is that 'Tilda—the splendid girl that fought the sailor?"

"That 's the gal, sir. Fight anybody of 'er own sect in all London, bar none. She don't know it, and

it ain't worth while to puff 'er up abaht it; but she could. Lord, what a pity she war n't a man! She 's clean thrown away on petticoats. That chap ain't the fust one she 's fought when her blood was up. I 've spotted 'er many a time, when she did n't think I was lookin'. But I never took no notice to 'er. Puffs 'em up so. You see, 'er brother was a fightin' man, and she learned it natural like, playin' with 'im. She dunno what she knows in that line, 'cept when she 's mad; and then it all comes out. You 've got to git 'er mad fust, though. Quiet as a child at other times. That little gal what took the back room off 'er jest wusships 'er. So does that old woman as makes the weskits, in the parlor front. Funny to see the two gals both together, like a big dawg and a little dawg. Strange, too; could n't fight a mouse, that little 'un. She tried the flower trade, but war n't strong enough for it. Gone into a sweet-stuff fact'ry now."

"'Tilda sells flowers in the streets?"

"That 's it. Piccerdilly Circus. Most respectable. Take yer to see 'er any day yer like." He says this as one who is able to give influential introductions in public life; and with it he takes his leave.

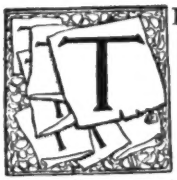
Once again, most extraordinary neighbors! A most extraordinary house!

Letter from Sedgcombe. Where am I? What 's that to him? Glowing account of the duke's house-party for Chester races! House-parties all over the place. Meeting never so well supported by the

county for years. Good old Sedgcombe! Good old Sedgcombe! Query: Poor me? No; I think not.

Letter from Trevor. Has turned serious and joined the Eton Mission for the Slums. "We ought to do something, you know." What a bore if he comes this way and spots me! Will I join? No, and be hanged to him! I fancy I 'm already on the job.

VI



HERE is one thing Covey has forgotten to say, and naturally, for he would hardly consider it worth his notice.

Never, never, never is this house at rest. It groans like a laboring ship. In your stillest berth, on the stillest ocean, you may hear your craft ever creaking its protest against the hindrance of wind or wave. So, here, you have always some sound, by day or by night—an oath, a laugh, a child's cry, a door at odds with its hinges, which, rightly interpreted, means, "Let us have peace." Once, in the dead of night, I wagered a beggar's dole to nothing that my house could not possibly keep quiet for fifteen minutes at a stretch. Just as the church clock struck the quarter, somebody fell upstairs, and the beggar won.

In the daytime, the caller-up begins his rounds with the dawn, and you may mark his progress from floor to floor by a muffled thunder of rapping, and the answering shock of heavy bodies rolling out of bed. Then the staircase wakes, as the laborers, in their hobnails, hurry off to work. At breakfast-time, disheveled mothers bawl supplementary orders from

their landings to children on their way to the chandler's shop. Now it is the trade noises—the mangle, ever at odds with the principle of the equilibrium of forces; the tap, the thud, the click of other minor industries; the cries of the captive animals in the yard, or of the wizened babies in the farm — live stock both, and both commodities of trade. Then come the social noises — the chatter of the slatternly gossips from their windows; the resumption of last night's quarrels or last night's reconciliations, equal parts of the happy day; the preparation for the midday meal, this a noise, like the rest, as plates, dishes, knives, are lent or borrowed from floor to floor. There is more noise than ever when the children troop in from school to dinner, with fathers, brothers, and sisters who work hard by. Their play in the yard carries on this perpetual motion of tumult for an hour more.

These are mostly the lucky children who are in natural ownership and kindly tending. The unlucky minority are not all in the baby-farm. Some are locked in all day, "to keep 'em quiet," while their owners go forth to work or to booze. The infant faces, lined with their own dirt, and distorted by the smeared impurities of the window-panes, seem like the faces of actors made up for effects of old age. The poor little hands finger the panes without ceasing, as they might finger prison bars. The captives crawl over one another like caged insects, and all their gestures show the irritation of contact. But the clearest transmission through that foul medium is to the ear rather than to the eye, in the querulous whim-

per, at times rising to a wail, which betokens the agitation of their shattered nerves. The children playing below look up at them, and beckon them into the yard, or make faces at them, with the charitable intent of provoking them to a smile.

Other infants, only less closely confined, have come from the outside, as Lilliputian journeymen, to earn their living by some of the slop industries carried on in the place, and at wages reckoned by halfpence a day. Some are thrall to the fur-dresser; one acts as a sort of shepherd of the multifarious live stock, to enable the proprietor to get drunk by method in a neighboring bar. As this employer of labor always keeps to the same bar during business hours, the child is never at a loss to find him when a customer calls. These children have been bred by habit in a sort of artificial disdain of play, and taught to place the point of honor in an ostentatious impatience of "kids" of their own age.

Dinner over, it is time once more for the click, the thud, and the tap of our domestic trades. But there is a sort of supplementary meal-hour, or movable feast, for the benefit of the girls who sell goods in the streets. These hearty and happy creatures rush in and out for the bite and sup, as occasion serves.

It is during one of these tempestuous inroads for nourishment that I have my promised introduction to the Amazonian 'Tilda. A whistle from Low Covey brings her to the window of her room, as we both stand together in the yard. She appears, holding a slice of bread and jam cut on the colossal scale.

The open window frames her like a picture which has the recesses of the room for its background. It reveals no amenities in the interior scene, no prints nor knickknacks, no finery, even, but her best hat. This lies on the bed, which alone is ample enough to support its broad circumference. Like the hat of St. Jerome in a well-known picture, when not in wear it serves to furnish the room. Her sense of decoration is purely personal. She is unusually well dressed for her station—in fierce blue as to the skirt, and in a bodice of some smart-looking cotton stuff. She grows on one as seen in the light of day. She is unquestionably a fine girl—a fine woman, her age, as I should guess, being about two-and-twenty. She is also a handsome one, though no faultless monster in that respect. Her expression is her strong point—all fire, energy, daredevil, and untamed will. She differs from many of the other women in having never had to endure a blow; and I think some of them like her no better for that. If the face were before me on canvas, to shape as I liked, I should take just a thought from the prominence of the cheek-bones, and perhaps reduce the fullness of the lips. I should do nothing at all to the dark eyes, and should leave the nose just as it had been left by nature and the happy immunities of pugilistic war. This is not to signify that the feature is perfect, but only that it is straight as far as it goes, though it does not go very far. The temptation to lengthen it a little, and to put more drawing into its rounded tip, might spoil an effect of perfect self-reliance which is her note of

expression. 'Tilda is evidently of the blessed minority who "don't care," and who have never had to feel that it is necessary to do so. She might, I fear, do herself an injustice if she looked clever. She uses no false pretense, I know, in looking game. She is tameless and unconditioned, to the very folds of her hair. I particularly admire the way in which the black mass of it is caught up into a great knot behind, as though with one fierce swoop of the hand. It is fettered there, I have no doubt, with frequent hair-pins, but it is manifestly rebellious in its bondage. In front it is arranged in those curious side-locks which seem to have come down to the coster-girls from grandmothers of the epoch of Queen Adelaide.

The shape and air of the face is rather Eastern, and especially Japanese—no uncommon thing in this rank. Yet it is Japanese only in the woman's way, and with due suavity of line. The type is outlandish in the modeling of the cheeks, in the short nose, and in the pouting lips. The large, well-shaped eye, however, and the white and red of the complexion, bring it home again. It is as though Omar's potter had wrought with the fullest sense of creative freedom, and in a mood of happy carelessness which gave its own spiritual character to the work of his hands. In our civilization such faces mark those who live their lives from day to day, with no yesterdays and no to-morrows—London coster-girls, Grévin's grisettes.

"What 's up now?" is her salutation, in a tone which, I am sorry to say, lacks clearness, owing to her

attempt to do justice at once to the articulation and to the bread and jam.

"'Ere 's that bloke what lives in the next room to mine," observes Low Covey, indicating me with a wave of his hand. It is simple, but it serves.

"'Ow d' yer do, sir?" says 'Tilda.

It is painfully embarrassing. I really do not know how to begin to speak to her. The Duke of Wellington, I believe, was in the like case when he reflected on the difficulty of pleasing a youthful sovereign. "I have no small talk," he said, "and Peel has no manners." For a ceremony of this sort Covey and I are a poor pair. A hundred nothings that might have carried me with credit through a London drawing-room are rejected as unsuitable ere they rise to my lips. Covey comes to my aid, but not effectually.

"Ain't she a clippin' gal?"

"Git out, yer silly fool," says 'Tilda, tapping the window-sill with a certain impatience.

The situation grows desperate.

"I hope you have quite recovered from your alarm the other night?"

"Meanin' to s'y?" says 'Tilda, with a glance of angry inquiry. She thinks, I fancy, that a speech which is civil in form must necessarily be unintelligible in substance, and, being so, is probably charged with the venom of a sneer.

"That s'ilor chap," explains Covey, ever anxious to make himself useful.

"Oh, that lot! I could ha' done 'im fast enough, if it 'ad n't 'a' bin for the knife."

"Could you spare me a buttonhole?" I ask, presenting the collar of my shabby coat.

"Sold out, wuss luck," laughs the girl. "An' blow me if I sha'n't be sold up, too, if I don't soon sling my 'ook an' git some more. Ta-ta, Covey. See you ag'in, sir, bimeby."

Yet she lingers; and it is now her turn to look embarrassed, as though she has some kindly intention which she hesitates to express.

"Please, Mammy, I 'm shy," says Covey, by way of explanation, and sticking his finger in his mouth in grotesque mimicry of the air of a blushing child.

"She wants yer to show up at a sort o' bun-struggle in 'er room," he explains, in answer to my inquiring look; "an' she dunno 'ow to git it out."

"A sort of what?"

"Well, kind of a tea-fight," he returns; for his only conception of plain English is never anything more than a second dilution of slang.

I look to 'Tilda for confirmation.

"Come to tea next Sunday?" says the girl.

I gladly accept. The window closes, and she disappears.

"She is a neat little bit o' muslin, ain't she, now?" cries Covey, as we leave the yard. "It 's all business, of course. The gal as looks best sells most nosegays. That gal would live by a flower-basket where others would starve. Rag-bags [her competitors] tied in the middle with a bit o' string; that 's what I calls 'em. She do look nobby, don't she, now? You would n't

have no idea of the kind of people as talks to 'er—a lord once, swelp me lucky, I ain't tellin' yer no lie! And she 's got 'er answer for all on 'em, don't you make no mistike.

"Alwize a-washin' 'erself," he adds abstractedly "Business ag'in"—as though trying to explain a seeming eccentricity by its law. "Scented soap, too, Sundays—num! num! num!"

As the day wears to its close we come to the night sights, the night sounds. It is still the groaning of the ship in pain. No. 5 John street is ill at ease. It sleeps heavily, though it turns in its sleep, and it has troubled dreams. It seems to wake from them, at times, in fierce quarrel; and fragments of passionate utterance, not precisely Sapphic, float from the open windows to the sky. In spite of their almost invariable vulgarity, they are touched with romantic suggestion by the associations. To hear them in broad day would be altogether revolting. Heard when the moon is shining, they have a sentiment of another kind.

"'Cause I ain't got no bloomin' money, yer round on me," for instance, seems on the face of it to betoken no more than the expulsion of a supplementary lodger from an overcrowded room; and the impression is strengthened by a noise on the stairs, which may be taken as a sign of process in an action of summary ejectment. Yet heard in the peculiar circumstances I have mentioned, smiting as it were the momentary silence of night, it stands for an eviction at the very least, and, potentially, for all evictions, for all thrust-

ings forth of the encumbrance, from Hagar's day to our own.

Watch when you will, the sordid drama moves with scarcely a pause. After midnight the gangs return in carousal from the gin shops, the more thoughtful of them with stored liquor for the morning draft. Now it is three stages of man—no more: man gushing, confiding, uplifted, as he feels the effect of the lighter fumes; disputatious, quarrelsome, as the heavier mount in a second brew of hell; raging with wrath and hate, as the very dregs send their emanations to the tortured brain.

The embrace, the wrangle, and the blow—this is the order of succession. Till one—to mark it by the clock—we sing, "'Art to 'art an' 'and to 'and." At about one forty-five you may expect the tribal row between the gangs, who prey on one another for recreation, and on society for a living. Our brutes read the current gospel of the survival of the fittest in their own way, and they dimly apprehend that mankind is still organized as a predatory horde. The ever-open door brings us much trouble from the outside. The unlighted staircase is a place of rendezvous, and, not unfrequently, of deadly quarrel, in undertones of concentrated fury, between wretches who seek seclusion for the work of manslaughter. Our latest returning inmate, the other night, stumbled over the body of a woman not known at No. 5. She had been kicked to death within sight and sound of lodgers who, believing it to be a matrimonial difference, held interference to be no business of theirs.

No. 5 John Street

The first thud of war between the "Hooligans" is generally for two sharp. The seconds set to, along with their principals, as in the older duel. For mark that in most things we are as our betters were just so many centuries ago, and are simply belated with our flint age. And now our shapelier waves of sound break into a mere foam of oath and shriek. At times there is an interval of silence more awful than the tumult; and you may know that the knife is at its silent work, and that the whole meaner conflict is suspended for an episode of tragedy. If it is a hospital case, it closes the celebration. If it is not, the entertainment probably dies out in a slanging match between two of the fair; and the unnamable in invective and vituperation rises, as in blackest vapor, from our pit to the sky. At this, every room that holds a remnant of decency closes its window, and all withdraw, except, perhaps, the little boys and girls, who are beginning to pair according to the laws of the ooze and of the slime.

So millions live, in one mode or other, all over the broad earth. The differences are only in the trappings. There is a John street in every shining city of civilization—in New York, Chicago, Boston; in Rome, St. Petersburg, Vienna, Madrid. Deep calls to deep of dirt and tipple, ignorance, squalor, and despair. There is a sort of liberty of John street, and fellowship of blood and gin-fire. If the Tzigany from Budapest walked in here at No. 5, we should know him for a brother, though he wore a bandana

in lieu of a cap. He would be as greasy as we are. He would itch with another variety of insect, that is all. The children might pelt him for a time, because they are silly enough to think that strange boots make a strange man. But their seniors, as soon as they had taken stock, in one swift glance, of the holes in his uppers and the devil in his eye, would yield him his appointed place without a word. His badge of outlawry from all the sweeter uses of life would take him into our smuggest cathedral cities, with a certainty of finding a garret or a cellar after his own heart under the shadow of the spire. Every village in the land, if it has not its entire John street, has its No. 5. It may be only the cottage at the end of the lane, but there it is; and there the feckless find their pallet and their roof. We are a mighty corporation, and I feel sure that we should not look in vain for quarters, if we tramped it to a settlement of the Samoyeds. There would surely be one tent fouler and more open to the sky than the rest—tent No. 5.

VII

ETTER from Jervis. Do I like otter-hunting? What 's that to him? Will I join a little party they are making up at Longtown for the lower reaches of the Esk? I won't. This is galling, and I must put a stop to it. None of them seem to know I 'm duck-shooting on the Caspian. (Mem.: Get Stubbs to put a line about it in the "Post"—dear old "Post," all alive just now with arrivals in town, and first parties for the season.) My night cabman is awfully keen on his bargain, and sends round for the paper as soon as he wakes. I wish he were equally punctual with his threepence a week.

It is Sabbath morn at No. 5 John street. The bells proclaim it—one, from a neighboring chapel, as it might proclaim an execution; others, from a church settlement, in music. But we want no proclamation; the house is aware. Rest, if not devotion, is written all over it, back and front. Our great hive is at least two hours late in stirring; and, even then, we remain but half dressed for at least two hours more. The first stage for public appearance is shirt-sleeves for one

half of the community, and skirts without "body" for the other. Men sit at the windows; the smoke of the morning pipe curls in the air. Ingenious children contrive to play in the yard. Washing, in these quarters, is classed among the duties—put it off. Birds sing from the greenhouse; and such breeze as finds its way to us stirs the leaves of the tree that pierces the glass roof of their prison. This poor sylvan survival, a mere cockney now, is a relic of some primeval shrubbery that once marked our status as a mansion. For all its shortcomings, the scene is peace.

The families converse from their back windows, with the Sunday "piper" for basis. I meet the boy that hawks this intellectual luxury from floor to floor, as I sally forth to beat up Low Covey in his quarters. We enter my friend's room together. He lies extended at his ease, the while he turns over the whole budget of light literature of John street with a critical air. In these productions, as I now, for the first time, make closer acquaintance with them, the tragedy of life seems to find its fullest representation in the sheets devoted to humor. Low Covey hands me one of these, which bears the not inappropriate title of "Leavings," with the remark, "That 's a nice, bright thing." It is the humor of savages who happen to be within touch of the appliances of civilization—the humor of drunken rows, of Homeric blows on the nose, of life as one vast spill and pelt of pantomime. These weekly comics, as they are called, are nearly all illustration. They have hundreds of cuts to the issue, and but a thin black line of legend to each. There is no vice in them, in the

sense of conscious depravation; it is but the bestiality of bad taste. The monkey-house at the zoo might delight in every issue, for to enjoy this revel of pictorial rowdyism it is hardly necessary to know how to read.

Covey's next selection has failed to please him. "'Swipey Loafer' ain't up to much this week," he murmurs, as he lays it aside with a sigh of disappointment.

In this elegant trifle, a typical family, and especially the typical head of it, lives before the public on a nutriment of winkles and gin. It gives us the humors of the bean-feast, and of the Margate sands, varied by glimpses into the back yards of Somers Town. The more winkle-shell and the more gin-bottle, the greater the fun; it is a simple plan. All the men are drunk, and most of the women are in short skirts. It is 'Arry in 'eaven—a heaven of plenty to eat and drink, plenty to wear, and a celestial choir forever on the spree. Words cannot tell its vulgarity, its spiritual debasement. Better vice itself, if redeemed by a touch of mind.

The "Police" sheets detain him longer—the sheets in which the same scheme of social observation is more or less associated with crime. "That 'll do to begin with," he says, laying aside one in which sprightly young women kick off the hats of maudlin young men in evening dress, or box each other for rights of priority, when the supply of lovers fails to go round. Burglars break into bridal chambers. Wives track truant husbands, and make for their rivals like pan-

thers on the spring. As gin and shell-fish are the principal ingredients of the first dish, so leg and chemisette are indispensable to the last.

"Nice and tasty," observes my friend, with a chuckle, as he points to a leg that seems to fear nothing on earth, nor in the heaven above, to which it points —not even Lord Campbell's Act.

These, in their innumerable varieties, form the mirror of life for the slums. They should be carefully stored in our literary archives, for they will be priceless to the future student of manners. They show how remote from the surface we yet are in our ascent from the bottomless pit of taste. They represent the visible world as the incarnation under an innumerable variety of forms, of the universal cad in the dual nature of woman and of man. The creative spirit moves upon the slime, and we have organisms and institutions. In the first, it is the cad as swell, as plutocrat, as strumpet, or as thief. In the other, it is the environment of the gin-shop, the race-course, the prize-ring, and the police cell.

These publications, I believe, are edited by mild-mannered men of blameless life, who bring up families on five pounds a week in the villas of Camberwell. They are owned by men of fortune who have worked their way up from the courts of Fleet street to mansions on the riverside, and to seats on the magisterial bench. I have myself assisted in toasting one of these persons at a public dinner, and have joined in extolling him as a model of successful enterprise. He has given a library and a public swimming-bath to his rural dis-

trict; and it is hoped that at the next vacancy he may be sent to Westminster to make our laws. A portrait published in one of his "properties" hangs in Low Covey's room. It represents "the bloke as was 'ung," one who, at the time of his arrest, was our fellow-lodger. Meritorious as an impression in art, it is defective as a likeness, for it was taken when the cap was drawn.

In spite of these aids to cheerfulness, my friend is manifestly troubled in his mind. In truth, on Sabbath mornings he is more or less in hiding from the missionaries. Our house, I find, instead of being our castle, is but a sort of railway junction of social agencies. All seem bound for this spot from the most distant parts of the system. Vast consignments of ministration cross each other at our quivering points, and not without danger, as politics, religion, science, art, and the rest, rushing in pell-mell, contend for the patronage of No. 5.

"I can't get nobody to leave me alone," complains my friend. "I feel a'most barmy with it all. This 'ere improvin' lot 's got me down on their books jest as if they was perlicemen—age, occypation, time o' goin' out, time o' comin' in.

"Hush!" he cries, as another tread is heard on the landing. "There 's old Conroy, bet yer what yer like. Lay close."

It is too late. An elderly man in black, which betokens not mourning, but respectability, gently pushes his way in. He looks, what I afterward find he is, a city missionary, who was once of the world as a shop-

keeper, and who now calls sinners to repentance as the unpaid pursuit of his leisure. He has an open countenance. He seems a good man. I am sure he is a perfectly sincere one. His old civility to customers is now unction, with scarcely a change.

"Good morning, my friend. Jest come to bring you a little picture I thought you might like to 'ang up in your room."

He unrolls a colored lithograph which represents Queen Victoria offering the Bible to an inquiring savage as "the true cause of the greatness of England." The chief kneels, in a loin-cloth of ostrich-plumes. Ministers in the Windsor uniform hover in the background. Her Majesty wears the crinoline of that happy middle period when we were still able to smack our lips over our own flavor as the salt of the earth.

Covey regards it with evident approbation, but he seems to want time to make a suitable acknowledgment. On occasions of this sort, well-bred persons find nothing more difficult than to hit the mean between self-respect and the effusiveness of gratitude.

"There is a double interest in that picture," says Mr. Conroy. "It shows what queer kind o' people, if you might put it in that way, the Queen rules over, and what blessin's she bestows on 'em."

He is evidently a patriot, and he glows with the thought of the evangelizing mission of his country. His perhaps too exclusive survey of mankind from the point of view of Exeter Hall has led him to believe that the flag makes the circuit of the globe to the sole end of carrying the Scriptures in its folds.

"What might be 'is name?" asks Covey, at length, pointing to the chief. "Anybody we bin lickin' lately?"

Mr. Conroy (rather uneasily). Oh, no; there was never any trouble with him—brought up by the missionaries.

Covey. What sort o' lingo, now, would he speak—in a manner o' speakin'?

Mr. Conroy. Sort of broken English, I fancy—at any rate, when he 's comin' our way.

Covey. I s'pose everybody all over the world 'll know our patter bimeby.

Mr. Conroy (with modest pride). That 's what it 's coming to, I fancy. They pick it up, like. It 's the tracts.

Covey (warming). An' what 's the lingo up yonder, I wonder?

Mr. Conroy. Up where?

Covey (apparently too shamefaced to name a better world). That plice what you 're always a-talkin' of.

Mr. Conroy. English 'll do, I think you 'll find.

He does not say so in terms, but he manifestly cherishes the hope that our tongue, if not exactly the sole language of heaven, is certainly the one most in use there. I infer as much from a short discourse on the perfections of the divine Ruler, which he proceeds to hold for our joint benefit. There can be no doubt of the good man's inclination to the belief that his Maker is at heart a Briton. He suspects irreverence in the conclusion, and would be glad of escape from it, but there seems no way. The Lord's steadiness, his

constancy, his perfect sobriety of spirit, his great constructive activities, his combined justice and mercy, are all, in Mr. Conroy's view, eminently British qualities.

The only circumstance in which he seems to palter with this pride of race is his attribution of our remoter origin to one of the lost tribes. He courteously invites our perusal of the latest tract on that subject, as he leaves the room.

"He 's a grand old ruin, but he don't mean no 'arm," is Low Covey's judgment on him, when his back is turned.

My friend now looks round to find a place for the new print. It is no easy matter. His walls are crowded, and chiefly with presentation copies. A portrait of the Earl of Beaconsfield, in printed oils, occupies the place of honor over the mantelpiece, and is evidently regarded by its owner with peculiar reverence.

"Real lidy gimme that. One o' these 'ere Primrose dymes—rides in 'er carriage, and keeps it waitin' cawnah o' the street every time she comes up—wish I may die."

This excellent person appears to be taking him through a brief course of constitutional history.

"Wat Tyler—ever 'ear of 'im, 'an' Jack Kide? Well, this 'ere chap put 'em down. 'Rooshians shall not 'ave Con-stan-ti-no'ple'—stopped that little gyme, too. It was 'im as brought over the primroses to this country. Many a dollar he 's put in 'Tilda's pocket, you bet."

A photograph of the "Madonna" of Botticelli, which faces this all-compelling nobleman, was the gift of an-

other lady. "Nice sort she is, too. Wears a green frock, no waist to it. 'Curl sersiety.' Sounds like somethink in false 'air, don't it? But she 's all right that w'y."

In this case, I understand, the very laudable object is the development of Covey's sense of the beautiful in and for itself. He has been assured that frequent contemplation of this work will do wonders for his general education in the amenities, and he has been induced to promise that he will look at it at least twice a day. He keeps the promise by fixing his eye on the picture, as on vacancy, while smoking his pipe.

He ultimately finds room for the new work by displacing the framed set of rules of a church club. This institution offers him every recreation but beer, and especially a weekly set-to with the gloves between an athletic curate and all comers. The champion is from Oxford (new movement), and this apparently is his way of reviving the earlier methods of converting the heathen. On Saturday nights he is ready to visit Low Covey at the club, to smoke a short pipe in his company, and, perhaps, to black his eye. On Sundays he expects Covey to visit him at St. Amanda's, and to see him, awful in full canonicals, with power of binding and loosing, banning and blessing—the priest behind his altar-rails.

"He ain't much of a 'and with the gloves, though he fancies 'isself a bit in that line. I 'd rather talk to 'im any day than spar with 'im. Yer see, 'e 's such a good sort, yer don't care to land."

At this juncture Covey starts and assumes something of the tremulously watchful attitude of the

hunted hare. A trill as of miniature cymbals is heard on the staircase, with now and then a deeper note as of the muffled drum. In another moment the instrument, whatever it is, is used for a rap at the door; and in answer to Covey's resigned murmur of "That 's me," a quite beautiful young creature, in the uniform of the Salvation Army, enters the room. Her air, her sweet voice, and her gentle bearing make one indifferent to certain little peculiarities of accent and manner, and they are calculated to allay all uneasiness in the prospect of meeting the housemaid in a better world.

It is a tambourine lass with her instrument. The pink and white of her face is set off to perfection by the great plain bonnet, whose dark blue is carried out in the rest of the costume, with never a jarring note. She is all health and all happiness, I should say, to judge by her look of perfect peace.

"Now, brother, come and be saved this very minute. You promised me for to-day."

"Don't want to disgrace myself, capting. Wish I may die, if I 'd larf; and if I did n't, I should have to bu'st."

"Larf as long as yer like; only come."

"It ain't you what I should be larfin' at. It 's them other cures."

"I know; poor old Colonel Slocum. But he 's such a dear!"

"Kunnel Slocum! Why, 'e 's only a coaley—jest as I might be. I can't stand that."

"Never mind, brother; larf at 'im. It 'll only make

'im pray for yer twice as 'ard. 'Alleluiah! Come, and do let us finish off the job this time. Save yer while yer wait."

"I ain't a-goin' to sit along with no sinners, not me, to be talked down to by a gospel shark."

"Yer shall be saved all by yerself."

Covey softens. "I don't mind goin' jest as far as the door of the barricks, to see yer march out. But I won't go in."

"Just as far as yer like, brother. Come."

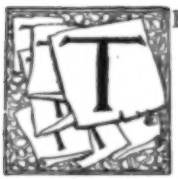
Poor Covey! One sees the end of it.

I feign to take my leave, but really I mean to see the adventure out. I observe them through the chink of my door as they pass down-stairs, the girl leading, Covey following with a defiant air. I follow both on tiptoe, and track them stealthily in the street until they reach "quarters." It is the usual service promenade, with banner and music; and the young woman, spinning her timbrel betwixt thumb and finger, is the Miriam of the hour. Covey stands at the street corner with his hands in his pockets, and observes out of the tail of his eye. He would have scorned a more active interest in the proceedings, had not, unfortunately, a loutish fellow hurled a cabbage-stalk at the contingent, which struck the tabor out of Miriam's hand. Low Covey instantly knocks him down, and then follows the procession—though still without joining it—just to see fair play. In this way he becomes one of the outer ring assisting at the service, and he hears the charming evangelist in the poke-bonnet preach and pray. He smokes all the while, to

show that, personally, it has no effect upon him. He follows the band back to barracks, still as a body-guard; but at the doorway the evangelist beckons, and he goes in. Before the service closes, I see him sitting on the sinners' form, with his pipe smoldering in his pocket, his head bowed, and his shoulders rounded in the collapse of repentance. I cannot see his face, but there is shame all over him. The bullet head, the big ears, standing, as it were, erect in relief from the close crop, are eloquent of confusion, at least, if not of remorse. When the company has prayed over him, he is suffered to escape.

My last view of him leaves him once more in the filthy streets of the filthiest capital of civilization—unswept because it is the Lord's day. I leave him, unconverted indeed, but still dazed, in a group waiting for the opening of the "pubs," amid a litter of last night's fried fish-bones, this morning's orange-peel, and the foul dust of a month's neglect of the simplest process of sanitation. Oh, the nameless abominations of the scene! Not a missioner of them all has wasted a thought on these ever-present suggestions of every kind of defilement while he has been tinkering at our souls. A thousand sittings of the Kyrle Society have left these footways as they are, with their bordering houses all smeared with smoke like huts of the dawn of civic life. Now I know why all who can fly London town on Sundays, and why so many who cannot keep indoors and play loo. The place is too maddening, without the bright wares in the shop windows to mask its ugliness and grime.

VIII



HE portrait of the Earl of Beaconsfield was given without conditions. It, therefore, does not preclude Low Covey's intermittent attendance at the meetings of the Anarchist Society in the hall in the yard. These, I understand, are the only gatherings of an educational character at which he is allowed to smoke under cover and to keep his cap on. He has been led to apprehend anarchy, in this manner, as a system under which everybody is to do as he likes, and those who won't do it shall be made. The meetings accordingly offer some resource against weariness of spirit at times when he has no money for a house of entertainment, properly so called. On such occasions, he listens to that terrible old hot gospeler who lodges in the other shed in the yard, and who screams undying hate of all institutions whatsoever in Low Covey's patient and all-receptive ear.

Now and then the program is varied by "chemical" courses, at which the strange man in black, who is Old '48's fellow-lodger, gives purely expository discourses in broken English on the effect of explosive forces. His name, or rather his pseudonym for the

platform, which in Low Covey's rendering was something of a mystery, is at length made clear by a handbill lying in my friend's room. It is "Azrael"; and this, I am enabled to say, on the authority of the handbill, is the name of the angel of death. On the surface of it, his lecture is but a demonstration in the art of making the most of common things. "Waste nothing, my friends," the lecturer seems to say. "With an old saucepan, a common sardine-tin from the dust-bin, a piece of wire, six penn'orth of this from the chemist's shop, and six penn'orth of that, you may lift a mountain into the air." Why you are to lift it, and at whose expense, is not for the lectures Low Covey attends. That is for inner circles of teaching, which, with his provoking want of curiosity on the subject, my friend will never reach. In both its inner and its outer meaning it is preëminently a lecture for the poor. As Low Covey may be supposed to apprehend it, it is but a way of showing how, by the expenditure of a little pocket-money, the ingenious pauper may make a chemical toy. Low Covey is not quite such a fool as he looks; but though he does not want the toy for himself, it is no part of his business to stand in the way of those who do. He "don't take no notice," that is all. Besides, he has a sort of involuntary respect for the lecturer, of whom he usually speaks as "Izreel, Esquire."

Among other ministrations as they affect the house at large, we convert a Jew on the premises, or seek to convert one, by weekly visits, each marked by a dole. The recipient is a semi-savage-looking fellow from

Galicia, who works for the fur-dresser on the first floor. Like Nicodemus of old, he takes his instruction by night. The devout, Hebrew his employer, would, I am sure, stand no nonsense on this point; so the transaction has to be kept a secret from him. A special missionary, and interpreter of the Yiddish, waits for his man at the foot of the stairs, and serves him with a tract or a copy of a Christian gospel. With this, which may be regarded as a citation to a superior court of conscience, there usually passes a small coin as service-money. Our neophyte of the cruel eye and the mocking lip seems to have found a way of turning doubt itself into cash. He dwells, as it were, on the lake shore of baptism and conversion, and adroitly keeps himself in the state of being about to be.

I like to think that, whatever the spiritual issue of it, the attempt cannot fail to do material good all round. Each gets his dinner by it, the catechumen in the coarser kind of fried fish and soused gherkin; the institution that has him in hand in choicer fare for the secretaries and missioners of its staff. A worthy man of my acquaintance, in that other life I have just left, reared a family in much comfort and respectability on his persistent endeavors to bring light into the mind of the Parsees of the port of London. He was in no hurry about it; they were in no hurry. He acknowledged subscriptions and prepared letters for the post all day; stuck his last stamp on his last envelop at 4 P. M.; then, snatching up a pound of salmon, or other delicacy of the season, from an osier bag be-

neath his desk, hurried off to have it dressed for six-o'clock dinner at his villa in the suburbs. So far as I could ascertain, there had been an unbroken regularity in his movements for at least five-and-twenty years. The hansom never failed to be at the door to take him to the station; the family waved welcome from the lawn, as he hove in sight with the provender, at the close of his well-spent day.

A Scripture-reader of the Establishment regularly visits my neighbor, the astronomer. This inmate, known only to our other neighbor on the floor as "Holy Joe," is the model poor man of the fashionable disquisitions on virtue below stairs. He is pious; he is disinterested; he has an almost slavish respect for his betters, and a profound sense of the original sin of his own class. He has cut down his human nature to its irreducible minimum of aspiration and of claim. For all his long tale of years, he has been the spirit that denies the good in itself. He has taken a hard gospel of his own birth-badge of unworthiness in perfect faith. He is a member of our national church, and he has walked by its law as laid down from the pulpit to those who sit in the free seats. He has lived a life of industry, honesty, temperance, and self-control, according to the rules. His one principle of conduct is to do without; and in this respect he could give points in a match with a Stoic sage, or a boor of provincial France. He saves on the earnings of a Hindu ryot. His touchstone of lawful pleasure is that it shall be without cost. He never goes to the fair; he picks up his daily paper from the gutter; and he

likes his very Bible the better because it is to be had for nothing. He would be worth his weight in gold on some public platforms whereon I have sat. A wise legislature, or, for that matter, a wise church, would endow him as an object-lesson in the efficacy of those counsels of perfection addressed to his class. He should be the show fakir of the meetings of the Thrift Society. There would be only one objection: the public display of his misery of moroseness might have no other effect than the exposition of the drunken helot. All that the company would have before them would be a broken man, bent with spiritual privations even more than with age and want, and a missing link between the sick and solitary ape and the most piteous developments of antisocial humanity.

These are but our spiritual agencies, and not all of them. The gray robes of the Catholic sisters brush the hem of the garment of the ministrants of other faiths, as they meet in silent avoidance of other contact on the stairs. These, again, are brushed by the skirts of the red women, who glide from floor to floor to distribute leaflets of convocation to fiery meetings against throne and altar, and sometimes to supplement the appeal by the charm of polished manners and the witchery of smiles. One of these is just now struggling for the possession of the virgin soil of 'Tilda's nature, in competition with the Water-cress and Flower Girls' Mission, and with the High-church militant curate who hopes to black Low Covey's eye. 'Tilda's preference, I think, is for the last. She is understood to regret the social conventions that pre-

vent her from putting on the gloves with this champion and taking her chance of conversion in the good old-fashioned way.

Law and administration have their claims on our attention, and are as busy with us as the rest. Now it is the coroner's officer who has come to verify a rumor of mysterious death. Then it is a sanitary inspector who is on the track of a prohibited smell—haply one emanating from an infectious corpse, kept "for company," when it ought instantly to be put underground. We side with the corpse. Where so many smells are lawful, why this rage of persecution against one? Such, I think, is the public opinion of No. 5. We take the part of our malignant odors, and baffle the agent of authority, as such, to the best of our power.

The factory inspector has an eye upon Ikey of the first floor. But then, Ikey has an eye upon him; and wonderful are his shifts and resources, and his precautions against visits of surprise. At a moment's notice, he seems able to make the plant of his fetid industry vanish as by a touch of Harlequin's wand. While his wife detains the inspector in parley in the front room, the back is swiftly transformed into the likeness of a shepherd's cot, wherein there is no guile. The toiling infants under age are found at the game of lotto; the Galician becomes a friend who has just dropped in for a cigar.

When these embodied worries pass, haply the school board officer takes their place, and prowls among the children at their play to find one who is

not on the books. The children get their first lessons in lying in their endeavors to baffle him and his colleagues in authority. They scent an inquisitor from afar. They are, accordingly, in great demand for purposes of deception and sordid intrigue. Their air of candor is, as the bloom on their cheeks, beyond all resources of art known to their elders. They earn halfpence by well-told "bangers." They are sent out to lie to the grocer. They are kept in to lie to the tallyman. When they lie on their own accord, they are punished with stripes, to make them understand that deception is sometimes a breach of faith.

Then, we are occasionally raked fore and aft, by the summoning officer, for offenses committed in our pursuit of the street trades, or for threatening language used on our landings, in the war of floor with floor. And in the wake of the summoning officer lurks often the sinister figure of the detective in his uniform of pea-jacket and billycock hat. His coming sends a thrill through the community; and you may know at a glance all who have reason to fear him, by the swift flight of the scouts to the several rooms. He usually moves as straight to his quarry as a falcon, and plucking one from our midst, sails off with him into the void of law and order beyond our ken.

The depleted brood resist but rarely, for to them the "'tec'" is fate. Their professional standing may be known by their degrees of resignation. The amateur of crime has a tendency to waste breath in protest, expostulation, and denial. With those in the business, never a needless word is spoken on either

side. The thief-catcher announces his errand; the thief prepares for instant departure, and, if required, stretches out his wrists for the handcuffs, and even helps his captor to adjust them. On the captor's side, there is a disposition to oblige him in small matters when he thus keeps a civil tongue in his head. He is allowed to take his overcoat, wherewith to supplement the scanty allowance of bedding in his cell, and to furnish himself with a few other articles that may tend to promote his comfort during the period of preventive detention. They lie ready to hand, for he lives as one who may be summoned to a journey to a far country at any time. He moves into jail, with his little belongings, as an old traveler moves into his hotel. If, by rare chance, he is in a chatty frame of mind, he may venture on some indifferent remark, such as, "It 's a bit chilly o' nights now." The detective rarely fails to give him a courteous though a brief reply. On both sides, they know that the conviction is entirely an affair of the science of proof. If the proof is adequate, the arrest will hold good; if not, the captive will be at liberty again in a few days. The deadly calm of it all is rather sickening when you see it for the first time.

The basements are the detective's favorite hunting-ground, though sometimes his discreet presence may be encountered on the upper stairs. The thief is the common object of his search, but on rare and stimulating occasions he has been known to come to us for a murderer. This renders us sleepless for a night, and famous for a day. Within Low Covey's recollec-

tion, our building has been twice pictured in the evening papers—once with himself smoking at the window of his room.

The authorities struggle not only with us, but for us. They are divided against themselves in the conflict of jurisdictions; and there is sometimes good sport in playing them off one against another. Their suspicion of us is tempered in its effects by their mutual jealousies. Thanks to these, you may sometimes escape them altogether while you leave them to fight out a question of boundary in overlapping areas.

The sum of it all is that beneath this storm-tossed sea of agencies—legal, religious, moral, material, and social—we lead a quiet life wherein no single soul need be balked of its desires for beer, for skittles, or the rest. Not one of these powers has us fairly in its grip. We are as our masters: we take ourselves with a liberal allowance; and, by mere force of imperious needs, we always contrive to give the devil his due.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE REPORT

In some instances, sir, I fancy we are the necessary implication of the pride of life in our betters. We stew in our degrading poverty, and in the vices which it breeds, that the others may have a cool time as well as a merry one. No. 5 John street is a sort of domestic office of the pleasances of Mayfair. Olympus itself (of which, no doubt, your Excellency has heard) has, I dare say, its back premises. If we knew all, we might find that its joys involved much drudgery for some bestial corps of slaves. All these braveries of superior persons walking clean-footed on the asphodel, and sipping nectar from cups of gold, must lay

heavy work on serving-men and scullions somewhere in the rearward part. Behind all earthly pomp and dignity and ease and godlikeness, as we know, there is ever the toil-worn drudge. Why not so up there? We are lamentably ignorant of the social economy of paradise. The burial service, quoting Holy Writ, gives us a discreet though tardy hint of it in telling us that one star differeth from another star. I suspect the continued existence of a band of angels, who unwillingly bear the motto, *Ich dien*. Might not this throw new light on the story of the late revolt in heaven? Was it mere pride and envy of unattainable superiority, or was it not rather a rising of the drudges? I very much doubt whether an eminent poet gives the dog's story quite fairly to the dog.

MEM.: Cut out as too fanciful, and work in something about the following from to-day's "Morning Post":

The state train of the Empress Dowager of Russia is the most splendid thing of its kind ever constructed. Its decorations and furniture are of surpassing magnificence. The drawing-room is furnished in rose-colored satin, and all the fittings are of silver. The bedroom is equally sumptuous. The train includes a spacious kitchen, and it consists of ten huge carriages, all communicating, and all lighted by electricity.

IX

ILDA'S tea-party. It has been a charming thing to look forward to. In my eagerness for it, I am ready long before the hour, and I sit at my window counting the strokes of the clock.

I am not without occupation. There is always something to see or to hear in this wonderful house.

This time it is a wrangling discussion in the back yard between '48 and the tailor on the premises, who in public life, it appears, is the ninth of a Conservative workingman. The fraction is suspected of having money in the bank, and is not unwilling to bear the imputation. Their skirmish of to-day is but the friendly snarl of two curs, who fought a pitched battle yesterday, and will fight another to-morrow. Their contests take place in Hyde Park, where both hold high rank among the dialecticians of the Marble Arch. Their minor encounters are but the discussions of home life. The champion who thinks he had the best of it in the last bout is usually the first to appear.

In this instance it was '48. He first drew a chair outside his shed in the yard, as though to enjoy the afternoon breeze, and he sat for a while surveying the

upper windows, not unlike a street performer waiting for an audience. He was presently joined by the tailor—one of the conventional stamp, small, and almost as fleshless as an anatomical preparation. Their meeting did not preclude the civilities of ordinary social intercourse. They greeted each other with courtesy by "passing the time of day."

The affectation on both sides is that they meet by accident. Yet they as deliberately meet by appointment as pugilists who have come out to struggle for a belt. The house knows it, and watches them from its back windows, which, for the occasion, form seats at the ring-side. The tailor carries his banner in the shape of a Conservative paper which points the moral in support of throne and altar. '48 bears a copy of a red Republican news-sheet, written, set up, printed, published, and sold by himself—a marvel of one-man power in an enterprise which is usually supposed to exemplify the division of labor carried to its farthest range.

This journal, if I may be pardoned the digression, has no circulation, yet it supports '48, as he supports it. It is bought, as a curiosity, at public meetings, and usually by persons who have in view an inexpensive donation to the British Museum. Many who purchase it make the transaction an excuse for offering the proprietor an alms. It has every note of singularity. It is printed on paper of the texture commonly used for posters, and of the hue of anemic blood. Its orthography is that of the first standard; its syntax aspires to the perfect freedom of the

anarchical ideal. It is set up from a composite font suggestive of the clearance of a jobbing printer's dust-bin, and containing so undue a proportion of capitals that they sometimes have to take service out of their turn, at the end of a word. It might appear to have a large staff, for no two of its articles are signed by the same name. "Brutus" writes the leader; "George Washington" supplies the reports of meetings; "William Tell" gives reminiscences of the Chartist rising; and "Cromwell" acts as agent for advertisements. To the initiated, however, these are but so many incarnations of one commanding personality. When '48 has written the entire number, he sets it up. When he has set it up, he carries it to a hand-printing press which Gutenberg would have considered crude. When the press happens to be in a good humor he obtains a copy by the ordinary method. When it does not, he is still at no loss, for he lays the forms on the table and prints each sheet by pressure of the hand. Earlier difficulties of this sort were met by the coöperation of his wife, now deceased. This devoted woman sat on the forms, and obtained the desired result by the impact of a mass of corpulency estimated at fourteen stone. Her death is said to have been accelerated by a sudden demand for an entire edition of a hundred and seventy copies descriptive of a riot in Hyde Park. These earlier issues are valued by collectors for the extreme sharpness of the impression.

The combatants, being now in presence, offer the salute.

"Nice day," says '48, as the challenger.

"Very," returns his antagonist. "We could do with a little rain, though, for the growin' crops."

'48's next observation is more to the purpose of the meeting.

"It won't make no difference to the pore, crops or no crops, and none to your friends, neither. The r'yal famerly can always fall back on jam-tarts."

"And your side won't be much wuss off," retorts the tailor, with spirit. "I 'm told there 's plenty of nourishment in beer."

"Then I should advise you to treat yourself to a pint now and then."

The occupants of the window-seats wink at each other. The battle is joined.

"Do you happen to know the amount of the drink bill o' this country?" asks the tailor.

"No; I don't know, and I don't care."

"I thought so; that 's your ignorance. Why, it 'u'd keep fifty royal families fifty times over."

"One 's enough for me. Let 's see—'ow many million is it a year?"

"About half as much as the salaries of the paid legislater o' the United States, I fancy; but I 'ave n't exactly worked it out."

"Bloodsuckers!" ('48)—which means first blood for the tailor.

But the clock strikes, and I fly down-stairs to the more congenial society of the fair.

My arrival completes the tea-party, though it still leaves us a little out of balance as between Mammy,

'Tilda, and Nance, on the one hand, and, on the other, Covey and myself.

'Tilda is attired with distinction. Her skirt is of magenta cashmere, her bodice of a deep-blue cotton, dotted with stars, which suggests distant and hopeless imitation on the part of the firmament. She wears a brooch of German silver, and shoes with pointed toes. Her handkerchief perfumes the whole room with lavender—a circumstance to which Covey's frequent "Num! num! num!" calls embarrassing attention.

The meal is of the solid variety—ham-sandwiches, each nearly an inch thick, bread and jam, cakes made in the form of hearts, and a formidable kind of bun which here circulates under the name of "buster." It is spread in 'Tilda's room, which looks very neat for the occasion. Unhappily, the room commands the yard in which the champions hold their tourney, and as the window is open, it is difficult to remain wholly indifferent to the fortunes of the fight. I speak for myself. The ladies and Covey do not appear to pay the slightest attention to the matter. They are as sound-proof as those who have lived long in the society of infants, or of the insane. While 'Tilda, therefore, is urging polite inquiries as to my "new billet," the voice that really addresses the mind as well as the sense is '48's from the yard. It is toned for contemptuous mimicry.

"The r'yal dinner-party included Lord Buzfuz, 'is Grace the Duke of Fathead, and the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop o' Lawn Sleeves. Fust course, thin soup—match-gals' tears. Second course, gudgeon *à la* Conservative workingman. Third course, baked

proletarian 'art stuffed with soft sawder. The band played durin' dinner, likewise at the expense of the workingman."

The Tailor. Yes; it 's almost as good as that feed at Delmoniker's in America, where all the peaches was wrapped up in hundred-dollar bills.

"I don't take no stock in America," cries '48, in a fury.

"I thought you was a republican."

"I 'm a Social Democratic Federation, that 's what I am, and a anarshist after that."

"Come in, old fool," says a soft voice from the interior of the shed; but, for once, the champion pays no heed.

The tea proceeds with much dignity — with too much, perhaps, for I am free to confess that I am still at a loss to find small talk for 'Tilda, as I was at our first interview. I seem to dread the misadventure of some compliment that may rouse her ire. My part in the entertainment, therefore, is little more than that of a listener. To fill the void, Nance is called upon to oblige with a song. She is shy, and she shows a disposition to hide behind her hostess. But the Amazon, cruel to be kind, brings her forward with a stern "Pipe up, yer blessid little fool." It has the desired effect. Nance, after giving a touch to her pale auburn hair, veils her blue eyes with lids which, I should say, shut out but little of the light, and begins a sort of didactic dirge in three verses, with a recurrent line of "Farewell, father and mother, I 'm despised for being pore."

It finds great favor with the company. The poet has evidently performed his essential function by giving a personal expression to a general experience. The singer is supposed to be an outcast from an opulent home, and her wail suggests those rigors of the struggle for existence which all here have felt. The earliest and the latest poetry meet on a common ground of moral purpose. Hesiod might have been librettist of this lay. The true stability of the world is to be known by the tastes and customs of its common folk. At the close there is a tremor in the voice of Nance, there is a tear in Mammy's eye.

It is not a very auspicious opening, and Low Covey restores the tone of the company by a selection of bird-calls. But before beginning them he takes the wise precaution of closing the window. It is a marvelous performance, more especially as it has an air of mystery. The notes come from a corner, in which the artist has placed himself with his back to the light. In an instant the room is filled with the music of the woods. One bird after another salutes its mate in tones high, and clear, and piercing, or tremulous with the passion of summer nights. It is thrilling and poetical beyond measure. It is also diverting, in the extraordinary contrast between the broad-backed ruffian and the feathered lightness and beauty of the bird he feigns.

"Cleverest bird-call in London, bar none," whispers Mammy to me, as the applause subsides. "If he was more genteel-like to look at, he might make a fortune at the music-'alls. But there; you can't get him into

a black coat. He splits it, if it 's anything of a fit. And some days there ain't a note in 'im."

She speaks half in pity, half in admiration, as though the divine finger had been laid on Covey, and had oppressed him with its weight. It is the attitude of all simple natures and simple races toward genius or the gift. They reverence the burden; they pity the bearer. See a naked dervish, in the East, haranguing a crowd that bates no jot of veneration for him, though it regards clothing as almost a religious rite. He is not to be judged by their law; he has been "touched."

Dragons watched the dell in which Confucius was born. A whole aviary, no doubt, trilled over the barn wherein, as I should judge, the eyes of Low Covey first opened on the light. In such exceptional cases mere human obligations fall into the background. The free things of nature have the prior claim.

The yard is still insistently intrusive—to me, at least, for, unfortunately, the window has been opened once more. In spite of every effort to listen to none but my hostess and her friends, I cannot help hearing this from '48:

"Do you know what you ought to be? You ought to be flunky to a barrel of oysters. Do you know what that is? I 'll tell yer. I knowed a rich man once as made a god of his stummick, like they all do. He used to employ a feller to amuse his oysters on their way up to town, so as to keep 'em in good sperrits. He fancied they lost flavor when they was dull. The chap had to whistle tunes to 'em all the way from

Whitstable. That 's the sort o' berth for you. You 'd earn more by it than by stitchin' on a shop-board."

But I shut my eyes, and this, somehow, helps me with the other organs. Luckily, 'Tilda and Covey are engaged in animated conversation in a corner.

"You did manage them bird-calls to rights. 'Ow did yer pick 'em up?"

"When I was out on tramp, summer-time. Lord love yer! Lay down in a wood an' light yer pipe, an' it comes to yer from every tree. The 'ole place is alive with it, branch chirpin' to branch. I tell yer, if I did n't 'ave a bit of a change o' that sort, now and again, from this 'ere factory work, I should git quite barmy on the crumpet."

"Lord, 'ow I wish I was a man! I can't 'ear the birds nowhere but in Seven Dials."

"If you want to get it to rights, you must do like them—roost in the open air. Then one set on 'em sings yer to sleep, an' another wakes yer up in the mornin'. It 's prime, jest when you 're goin' off, and jest when you 're comin' to. That 's the real sort o' feather-bed—where the feathers is kep' on the birds' backs. Then, when you wants yer breakfast, ketch a few larks, an' toast 'em over a 'andful o' sticks.

"It 's a sort o' nature with me," he murmurs, in reverie. "I always was good at it, as a child."

"Pretty child you must ha' bin. I should like to ha' seen yer. Oh, my!"

"Well, I war n't so pretty as you, I dessay; but that wuz no fault o' mine."

"You was pretty enough, p'r'aps," says the girl, in a softened tone.

"Oh, go on jumpin' on me," returns Low Covey, sensible of his advantage; "I 'm only a worm."

"Git out, yer silly swine," is the maiden's reply.

The wretched yard respects nothing—not even this idyl.

The Tailor. You remind me of what Mr. Ruskin calls—

'48. Who 's Mr. Rusking?

The Tailor. Oh, you don't know! You should n't argue if you ain't up to things like that.

'48. Well, let 's see how much you know. When was he born?

The Tailor. What 's that got to do with it?

'48. Never mind. I want to find out how much *you* know about him.

Voices. He 's got him there. Stick to 'im, old Eight-and-Forty.

'48's subtleties of dialectic are evidently much relished at the ring-side. He is considered as "artful as they make 'em," as, indeed, he is. He has the habit of gutter discussion, and he knows how to ride off, in a difficulty, with a demand for proof on non-essential points.

The idyl continues:

'Tilda. Was you knocked about much when you was a young un?

Covey. Pretty tidy; only, I alwize stepped it when it got too 'ot.

'Tilda. Which on 'em did it for yer—father or mother?

Covey. Never 'ad no father to speak of. Kind o' bachelor's biby, you know.

'Tilda. 'Ow did yer get yer livin'?

Covey. I dunno. 'Ere I am.

'Tilda. Come now, Covey, that won't do.

Covey. Well, openin' cab doors, London season. "Box o' lights, sir?" other times. Tried your line once, but could n't get nobody to buy. Boys is no good sellin' nosegays—ain't got no back 'air. I was workin' up quite a little newspaper business arter that, but lost a shillin' through a 'ole in my pockit, and could n't go to markit for the stock. I tell yer, I *was* down on my back seam then.

'Tilda. Pore little kid!

From the yard.

The Tailor. There 's grammar! "You don't know nothin'." There 's Linley Murray for you! Oh, my!

'48. You 're a pretty objeck to talk about grammar to your fellow-workingman.

If the yard has interrupted us, we, I suppose, to be fair, have sometimes interrupted the yard. We have painful evidence of it, indeed, a moment later. A fragmentary remark of 'Tilda to Nance—"I think I 'll 'ave my feather done pink, to go with my noo frock"—has, it seems, reached the tailor, and has perhaps served

him as an excuse for his manifestly impending discomfiture in the debate. At any rate, it provokes an extremely ill-advised outburst on his part.

"I want a little more peace and quietness," he cries with asperity. "I can't argue among a lot of chatterin' women in a back room."

I know not how, but in the greatest tumult of sound we generally contrive to hear the one thing that concerns ourselves. Thus at sunrise, on the Australian plains, each wandering lamb instantly begins to thread its way home to breakfast, through a whole square mile of fleeces, in answer to its mother's bleat. The tailor's ill-natured remark is evidently meant for our hostess, and it goes straight to her ear.

It provokes a fearful reprisal.

"Shut up, you two bloomin' old idjuts," cries her wrathful voice from the window, "an' get up an' fight it out like men. You 're a pretty pair to talk about women's chatter, you are. Why, nobody can't 'ear theirselves speak when you begin."

"There 's grammar," exclaims the tailor again, this time in a murmur.

"Grammar, you old goshawk," cries the girl, throwing a bunch of withered flowers at him in high disdain. "What price grammar? It don't seem to teach people to keep a civil tongue in their 'ead."

"It 's the two negatives," says the tailor, as he bobs to avoid the missile, "that 's all. But them 's things you can't understand."

"Understand yourself. I can tumble to you any-

how, an' I know how many of you goes to make a man. That 's enough for me."

"Never mind 'im, dear," pleads Nance, soothingly. "Leave 'im alone. You can stoop to pick up dirt any day. Come and see my button boots."

Mammy lifts up her plaintive voice for peace, and the window-panes are soon interposed between room and yard.

It is thus my happiness to have seen the Amazon a second time on her path of war. The devil is in her defiant port, the devil of scorn, passion, and self-will. It is a devil of the back streets, and its manner and expressions are not so choice as those of the sorrowing head of the firm who is in personal attendance on Mayfair. She helps one to understand literature, sacred and profane. The earlier women of spirit were furies of this sort, I feel sure. She is Boadicea, skipping centuries of time—Boadicea, strong of her hands, and usually not a bit too clean of them, splendid in reasonless passion, decidedly foul-mouthed, no "British warrior queen" of nursery recitation, but a right-down "raughty gal," leading her alley to battle against the Roman "slops." With a trifling difference in costume, but none in spirit, she is Hera, the furious and proud, who is but travestied in the airs of a modern fine lady, put upon her by South Kensington esthetes. The ferocity of these types of womanhood is the secret of their enduring charm. Painted, varnished, framed, and glazed as we have them in our day, they are no more the real article than a hero of Angelica Kauff-

mann, wrought as in Berlin wool-work, is a hero of the fields of Troy. 'Tilda is a glorious survival of a time when woman struck for rights with her fist, long before she thought of cadging for them by witchery and wiles. These came later, when the rebel found herself vanquished in the open by a heavier hand. Dames Minithœa and Tomyris, the sainted Joan herself, would have felt very much at home at No. 5, and in a real sisterhood of elemental passions and untamable pride. If 'Tilda bore arms of heraldry, "'T is my pleasure" might be her device. If she took vestal's vows, it would be less by morality than by disdain and horror of a conqueror.

Noble savages—Arthur and his queen, and the whole Table, till they were washed and dressed by the arch-tireman of a century of proprieties to make a pageant for a virtuous court. A noble savage still, the sole inheritor of the tradition, this coster-"gal"! And a nice young lady for a small tea-party at all times.

X

HAVE got the sack.

It was given to me this Saturday afternoon, at the pay-table, without a superfluous word, when I went to take my money for the week. The pressure was over; they were discharging extra hands; they would want me no more. They did not say they were sorry; they did not say they were glad. They said just nothing at all on the sentimental side of the question, which was the all in all to me. As a mere unconsidered trifle of cause and effect in the reign of law, it was managed in a way that might have moved the envy of Providence itself.

For me it is embarrassing beyond measure, as threatening a premature end of my little chronicle of works and days. I have less than a pound in hand, after settling my small accounts, and on this I have to live for the full fortnight that has yet to run to bring my probation to a close. Six weeks we said at the outset; six weeks it shall be. But how about bread and butter, if no job turns up in the meantime?

I own I am considerably down on my luck when I get home and begin to realize what it is to be sud-

denly thrust into the ranks of the unemployed. Their condition, I can imagine, is not half so funny as it is made to appear in the comic papers, though one ought not to mind that. What I had reckoned on was steady work at steady wages—living on the eighteen bob a week, if you like, but being able to earn it, too. Here I am, all adrift as to the earning, and under dread of the milkman's frown. There are moments when I feel as fierce a forerunner of socialism as an old Jehovist prophet. It is all very well to say it will be over in a fortnight; the fortnight has to be lived. I am struck more and more with the consideration how little the sure and certain hope of Paradise tends to alleviate the pain of a tight shoe.

I am sitting in a state of deep despondency, when a whistle at the door announces a visit from Low Covey. I whistle a reply,—it is our established form,—and he comes in, cheerful as ever, and begs a light for his pipe.

"Did you get the shove to-day?" he asks.

"The what?"

"The sack."

"Yes."

"I got it too, and I fancied like it might be goin' round for the new 'uns."

"What are we to do? What are you to do?" It was the mere politeness of altruism, but I was able to summon just enough of it for the occasion.

"Wait till somethink' turns up, I s'pose."

"Oh, but that won't do, at any price, my good friend. You must make something turn up. How

are you going to live? Don't you think, now, you might try to be a policeman?"

"A slop?" said Low Covey, in deep disgust. "Not me."

"Well, let 's see. A messenger at a club—how would that do? I have some little interest, perhaps, and might speak for you."

"You are a green 'un, and no mistake," was Low Covey's reply.

"Yes, I see. The reading and writing, perhaps. I forgot. There 's a good deal of steady work at knife-cleaning, I believe; boots, too, and that sort of thing. Let me speak to somebody. I think I could manage something for you. I am sure I could. You sha'n't be left like this. Do you know anything about horses?"

"Donkeys, any amount," he said—at first I feared with a personal reference; but I did him wrong. "I 've made a good bit that way at the 'eath in my time; but it ain't no go now. All in the 'ands of the gypsies, and you 've got to fight the lot for the charnce of a crust."

"Wheeling a bath-chair—have you ever thought of that?"

"My langwidge would n't do for it," he said modestly; "it reely would not. Besides, there 's other drawbacks for things of that sort.

"The fact is," he added, in a burst of candor, "I ain't got no charikter—that 's about the size of it. Never could keep a job long enough to earn one. Nearly managed it once—six months as pot-man and

chucker-out at the 'Feathers.' And then lost the berth 'cos I would n't set to work on a pal as wanted to fight the landlord. Chucked us both out at the same time, and a jolly day we had of it. Never enjoyed anythink so much in my life. He 'd bin in the militia, too, and I was n't goin' to round on 'im. No, no; you keep your charnces for yourself. You 'll want 'em afore you 've done. Don't you fidget about me; I 'm all right.

"But that war n't what I come to say. There 's a little bit of a kick-up to-night with a few of us—sort of sing-song. Thought you might like to come—pleasure of your company—that kind o' thing, you know."

"Delighted. Where, and when?"

"In the 'all down-stairs, any time yer like, soon as it gits dark."

With this he takes his leave, or, of course, as he prefers to put it, his "hook."

The hall is that mysterious room in the yard in which we saw the congregation at prayer. It has been run up at the expense of what was once the garden, and it is let for meetings and for other public uses in relation to the life of the main building. It serves innumerable ends. You may hire it from day to day, and more especially from night to night; and you may make any reasonable tumult you like there, down to twelve, when, as a rule, not without exception, the gas is turned down. There is nothing, I understand, to break, but a few forms. The deal table has survived a hundred fights.

The landlord maintains the fiction of not letting it to the public. He merely lends it to his tenants, on a slight payment for wear and tear. He is entirely impartial as to its uses, within the law, or rather, let us say, within the risks of detection. I first beheld it as a conventicle. When next I became aware of it, it was the scene of an anarchist meeting. I saw the poor wretches trail their dripping banners into its recesses, after a three hours' drizzle in Hyde Park. On the following night it witnessed a boxing competition, which, I am credibly informed, was really a prize-fight. The other day they held a wake there, and hellish was the tumult of wailing and warfare as it rose to the reproachful sky.

It is a Feather Club on Sundays, from eight to nine, before the service of the Peculiar People, who have a little settlement at No. 5. A feather club is an institution for supplying our younger womankind with the one thing needful in the shape of ostrich-plumes for their hats. The plumes are dear, and it is impossible to pay ready money for them without having recourse to the principle of association. So the members of the club subscribe a shilling a week, and take their turn by lot to secure a feather, which is purchased with the proceeds. In this way every one is adorned in course of time, and on a system of instalments which is within all but the most modest means. The meeting is usually a brief one. The secretary, who is also the agent of the dealer, keeps the accounts, and presently the fortunate purchaser of the day emerges from the "'all," to shame the sun with a

crimson or a purple plume. The back windows await her, and cry congratulations, derisive or sincere, from their topmost heights.

It is a Cock and Hen Club on the night of our visit. This is a convivial institution, and, as its name implies, both sexes are eligible for membership. They meet to sing and, of course, to drink—a lady "obliging," and then a gentleman, by turns. Some of the songs are merely comic or sentimental; others, as Covey observes, would make your hair curl; and there I leave that piece of information for what it is worth to the wise. Toasts and sentiments vary the entertainment. These are given with much solemnity, in response to calls from the chair; and they are expected to be of an epigrammatic turn. "May the wing of friendship never molt a feather" is a favorite one, though, strictly speaking, by its very triteness it is considered the resource of a feeble mind. The postulant for honors is expected to study the literature of the subject. It is within his reach, in the form of a collection of "The Best Toasts and Sentiments of Ancient and Modern Times," published at the low price of one penny. I have a copy in my possession. As I should judge, some of its sentiments have the same hair-curling property as the songs of which we have just heard. From what I have learned to-night, No. 5 John street usually means business when it meets in committee of the whole house of the sexes combined.

Covey takes cordial leave of me as we reach our landing. "Off on tramp to-morrer, fust thing. See

yer ag'in some day. Keep your pecker up. Lord, what a livin' you might make pickin' up people! Wish I 'd got your education. Ta-ta!"

For the first time since I came to John street, I feel quite alone.

XI

IT is wretched next morning. How live for the remaining fortnight without a berth?

The budget, in the first place.

After paying all bills, I have just 17*s.* 6½*d.* in hand. In all this time I have n't saved a copper. Deduct 6*s.* for next fortnight's rent,— the terms are, pay or turn out,— and the balance, 11*s.* 6½*d.*, must serve for everything — washing, food, odds and ends, household and personal, "the fun of the fair."

The old budget is hopeless in this situation. The rent, of course, stands; for the rest, the pruning-knife. Cut down washing and service — to which Low Covey has ever objected as money thrown away; cut out the appropriation for pleasure; make a smaller sum serve to cover the whole fortnight for all incidentals, and we have 9*s.* ½*d.* left. Sevenpence a day for food makes 8*s.* 2*d.* for the fortnight, and leaves 10½*d.* to carry over to reserve fund, or three farthings a day for the unknown. An illness must come out of the three farthings, a luxury must come out of it, or, if not, out of the seven penn'orth of food.

It is clear, at any rate, and that is one thing gained. So I tie my money up in a sock, and begin.

I find that sugarless cocoa, dry brown bread, and water from the brook (freely construed as tank, or as drinking-fountain) will make the famine ration for my need. With these at hand I cannot starve. The water will cost nothing. The bread, a fresh, crisp loaf, decidedly appetizing to look at, can be bought for 2½*d.* The cocoa is but a fraction in farthings, say 3*d.* for the whole thing. With these as charms in the cupboard, the wolf can hardly force the door. A hunk of bread in the pocket will serve for other meals, and the 4*d.* left will buy a relish to help it down. Fried fish and potatoes can be had for 2*d.*, and this, with the bread, should make a dinner for a banished lord. Do without potatoes, and we add a penny to the reserve.

There is nothing like knowing exactly what you ought to do. It gives such a delightful sense of recreation in the breach of the rule.

So I lay in the bread and cocoa, and put a shilling in my pocket from the sock. Then, with a deep resolve to return the squalid balance at night to the fund, I sally forth to look for a berth.

To look for a berth! O celestial powers! Nobody wants me on this wide earth! Absolutely nothing that is in demand in the labor market can I supply. My poor old university gleanings in the field of the literatures, living and dead, are not a commodity. None will bid for my little airs and graces in somewhat broken German and non-idiomatic

French. My really curious reading in cabalistic literature has not the value of one of my loaves of bread. For an outsider, though I say it, I have a fair knowledge of the Greek coins of Asia Minor. My cabinet of the same has been examined, with an interest perhaps not altogether free from condescension, by experts from the British Museum. But my lore of that kind is not exchangeable into British coins in any market to which I have access. My very reading, writing, and arithmetic are not up to the current demand. I answer advertisements—I cannot afford to insert them. I drop in casually at offices and shops, and ask if they want a clerk. I am stared out, laughed out, or turned out. Few take me seriously enough to put a single question. One good Samaritan goes so far as to ask if I understand the typewriter. Amid the general indifference, his notice is an act of charity. A truly benevolent manager of a bank advises me to learn shorthand and bookkeeping by double entry—not, however, he is careful to add, with a view to any opening in his own congested establishment. Another good man, and the last of them,—all honor to his name,—struck, I would fain believe, by something in my air and manner, offers me a letter to the secretary of an omnibus company. It is to back an application for a conductor's place.

Six days pass in this way, and at the end of them I have an awful shock. I have spent exactly six shillings, when I should have spent but as many sevenpences; and I am all the difference to the bad. The daily shilling taken from the sock, and the nightly

resolution to put the change back next time, have done the business. I have gormandized—there is no other word for it. One cannot think of two things at once. In trying to earn I have forgotten to save.

What right had I to a dinner of steak-pudding at 4*d.*, and of two vegetables, a whole half-pint of beer, and a slice of jam-roll for the wind-up? Eightpence for one tuck-out! It was the temporary insanity of extravagance. The cup of tea, at a later stage of the meal, was madness itself. What right had I to a whole baked sheep's heart, at another never-to-be-forgotten revel? Threepence for the heart, with "tuppence" more for the boiled potatoes and the slab of greens, made fivepence, and a crime. In truth, the devil of Devil-may-care had entered into me, with every false hope of getting work; and I feasted triumph in advance. When my Samaritan gave me the letter to the bus company, I at once fell upon roast pork, baked plum-pudding, and a foaming half-pint to an extent which made me the poorer by the better part of a shilling. Triple fool! An onion or an apple would have been flavor enough for the dry bread. But I must needs offer the bread to a beggar, in the belief that I had done with it forever. The beggar, on this occasion, scorned even the pretense of living on it; he had not the good manners to wait until I was out of sight before he threw it away.

It is the last folly of the kind. The loaf, the disgusting cocoa, and the water have now to serve. Yet, when the bread positively mutinies on its way

down, and I am in danger of starving in the midst of this plenty of farinaceous dust, I commit other imprudences by giving it a lift with three penn'orth of leg-of-beef soup, or a morsel of fried fish.

The worst hardship of this fare is the style in which it is served. Those eating-houses! Shall I ever forget them to my dying day? The dirt of them! The cut of the customers,—rough customers, and no mistake,—who fight for knives and forks at the counter, and toss their leavings in the sawdust of the floor! The unholy boys of the tribe never waste anything in this way. Whenever they reject a morsel, they throw it at a neighbor in sport. Their vernacular is sheer slang. At the words "Door-step and sea-rover," the man at the bar produces a slice of bread and a herring. "Bag o' mystery" is the recognized equivalent for saveloy. At length I snatch my scrap and run, to find the elements of decency in the open street. Penury's worst hardship is the style in which its diet is served.

Yet, while I loathe it, I grow used to it. Little by little I lose the saving sense of nausea, and at last, for two pins, I could hurl my bit of broken with the best of them.

But one thing holds me back—the certainty that next Saturday midnight will see the end of it. At that blessed hour I am due at my dear old rooms in Piccadilly. I am pledged to it by a paragraph in the "Morning Post" announcing my speedy return to town. I have foregone a slice of pudding to buy a copy of the paper; and whenever my spirits sink

too low, I draw the well-thumbed sheet from my pocket and read my charter of hope. Stubbs has arranged it all. I am supposed to be rattling across Europe on my way home from the Caspian. He has his orders. I expect to find everything ready for me, but nobody sitting up. I am to turn my latch-key and walk in to the old life.

Thus my whole probation is still unreal, and I make the humblest excuses for it. A few days will see the triumphant end, and then, with the man in the play, "away to life and happiness!" Still, it has certain uses in suggestion. It is some slight approach to a statement in consciousness of the problem of the poor devil. I hunger, or I am at least ill fed; and to feed better I must find work. It is only an experience of the laboratory, I know, but it yields interesting results.

First, it seems to dispose forever of the lie that the best way to make a man work is to let him starve. The shorter my commons, the longer my loafing rests. Having lost hope of the issue in my first eager perambulation of the streets for a living, I now wander them agape. I am debauched into vagabondage, and I soon cease to look for a job. The awful moral loneliness of the life takes the "heart of a man" out of me. Self-respect, I find, is still but the eclecticism of the respect of others. With no friendly eye on him, the runner will lose his race. It is so plain that nobody in all multitudinous London cares whether I get work or fail to get it that I soon cease to care on my own account. My chief concern is how to glide

through the day with the smallest possible expenditure of toil, either of body or of mind.

It is easier, on the whole, to go hungry and dirty—for I soon find that washing is but one of the energies of hope—than to fret. So my nimble step declines into a stroll; and the probation has only to last long enough to make the stroll decline into a slouch. I watch the passers-by for the fun of the thing, since I have no longer any motive of prophet. I watch, and scratch, and munch my fitful provender, and am passably content when it chances to be a fine day. Aversion from the most necessary labors grows on me like an untended disease. When the bench is dusty, I leave it so rather than lift a hand. I see the crowds pass, and wonder what makes them so idly busy. I am of the humor of Marcus, only I have come down to it instead of working up: "Soon, very soon, thou wilt be ashes, or a skeleton, and either a name, or not even a name. But name is sound and echo, and the things which are much valued in life are empty, and rotten, and trifling, and like little dogs that bite one another, or little children who wrangle, laugh, and weep. . . . In this flowing stream, then, on which there is no abiding, what is there, of all that hurries by, on which a man should set a high price?"

The loafing philosopher, I am convinced, is of the same high mind as the Stoic, if he cannot always put it in the same way. I tried one of our fellowship on the news of the day, as we both lay sunning ourselves in Hyde Park. Our country was engaged in two little wars; all Europe seemed to be preparing for a

big one. Sensational murders were not wanting to our national home circle. There was a most appetizing case of divorce. He said nothing, but he growled indifference to the topics as I broached them, one by one. I thought, as I am full sure he thought in his own fashion: "Asia and Europe are corners of the universe; all the sea, a drop in the universe; Athos, a little clod of the universe. All the present time is a point in eternity. All things are little, changeable, perishable." But he was too much a man of the world to insist.

Naturally, I derive much comfort from statistics. I know that only a few thousands in our little township are so hard up for a meal as myself, and that I am still one of a sort of aristocracy whose luxury is one man, one room. Things are not so bad, after all. Over a hundred thousand have to herd two in a room; nearly ninety thousand live three in the box. Nay, they are still in thousands as they pig in seven to the four square walls. I don't know the number of hundreds of thousands who can afford but two meals a day. I dare say it is not high. The half-mealers, who always leave off with a hungry belly, I cannot pretend to reckon. I only know I am of their number.

The curious point is that the few persons in John street who swell the statistical average of the lucky grades are ever within one stage of my present state. Their pasture-land is the very cutting edge of the famous margin of subsistence, whether they earn wages of labor or wages of sin. A week's loss of work,—

almost a day's,—in hopeless industry, theft, or prostitution, will bring them to an actual cautery of unimaginable horrors. As I am abased to the parks and the gutters, I hear things and I see things that sear the conscience as with a red-hot brand. My bestial mates are the scourings of society, left in the sink after it has cleaned itself to don its braveries. It appals me to find that there are so many of us, women and men. Every quarter of town seems to have its contingent, every class to send us recruits.

Stop for one moment in the street to look about you, and a brother of our mystery will be at your elbow to cadge a brown. Hogarth's "Gin Lane," Pope's "Alley" are our alley and our lane, with but a difference of hooped skirts in the figures. The poet merely touched the abomination, and fled. The painter, in his function of prophet, came back to it again and again. He was of those who see the ever shall be in the what is, while the generating causes remain. You may match any scene from his "Inferno" in the London of to-day. The malady is deep down, and salve is no remedy. The symptoms that appear on the surface are exactly what they were a century and a half ago. Do what we may, there is ever this gnawing death at the center of things.

The strain of it seems to grow the harder as the day of deliverance draws nigh. Letters from my world to come pour in by every post. The famished dog can now smell the uplifted morsel, as well as see it, and he is fain to yell for desire. I find cards, invitations, congratulations, waiting for me in Stubbs's

big covering envelop every night. I read them as I nibble my remainder crust and wash down its gritty morsels with the vintage of the back yard. Town is filling; fatuous people who give dinners are gathering from all parts; places at good men's feasts await my choice; the dear old Achilles statue is again bordered with pretty toilets; and there is everything to foster the illusion that the world has a sweet smell.

The eights have come out at Oxford, and my old college has been bumped—to the general consternation even of the victors. This announcement, conveyed in an extremely sympathetic note, affects me less than I should have supposed, probably because it is not immediately connected with the prospect of eating and drinking. It distresses me, for all that. My very indifference to it threatens a beginning of moral paralysis. I seem to be losing touch of things. But this, happily, is not to last. An earnest, if interested, invitation to a great stud sale rouses me with the promise of entertainment for my first week of freedom. Here, at least, is something to long for that is not food. "Donner und Blitzen," I learn, "is a beautiful stamp of hackney, on clean, flat limbs, with great quality; a very fine mover, and has good manners and courage." Forgive the weakness! I have lived so long with the coster's ass.

One letter gives me a most exhilarating account of the meeting of the Ladies' Grand Council of the Primrose League. The good work is going on. Fifteen thousand copies of that portrait of Lord Beaconsfield which we saw in Covey's room have been dis-

tributed throughout the poorer quarters of London. Some of the roughest and least educated of laboring-men have shown a touching desire to possess them. They are to be seen in many a home which boasts but little furniture of any other kind. The belief that this symbol is meat, if not exactly drink, to the workingman, and that it makes an excellent substitute for a fire in cold weather, is interesting beyond measure. Yet I think the utterance of it might have been withheld, in courtesy to the great colliery lord who sat in the chair, flanked by the most glittering womankind of his order.

Next Saturday night brings the hour of deliverance; but meanwhile? The sock rings empty but for coppers, yet I want three shillings to finish my probation with body and soul in partnership. Two shillings would suffice at a pinch. And as the bidding hangs fire at this Dutch auction of claims, I feel that I would take one-and-six rather than turn a customer away. How to get it? Once more I resume my weary tramp for a job, and with the same result. What price a hungry belly? I was a fool to make this hard-and-fast promise at the start. I should have settled a pound a week on myself to cover risks.

The employment bureaus that have me on their books keep me there. The charitable agencies are only less keen on introductions than the committee of a good subscription ball. There is not enough work to go round. My section—window-cleaning, with its alternative, copying by hand—is a drug in the market.

It seems all so ineffectual, though at the same time it is so well meant. The good people who manage the business of relief wear a guilty look, and seem hardly to know how to face us. They have tried to feed us on promises, some of them scriptural, which they cannot keep. The great world of industry wants deft and competent workers, and is too abundantly supplied in every department, even with these. The very window-cleaning is a craft, and I am untrained. And, worst of all, the great world does not take us seriously. It knows nothing of our employment bureaus, and never thinks of seeking them out when it wants hands. It is well aware that it has only to whistle at the street corner to have its utmost need supplied. There we stand before our honorary secretaries, male or female, our visitors, inquiry agents, or what not, mute evidence against them of well-intentioned lies. They have assured us that if we keep our hands from picking and stealing, and show a readiness to take what offers, work will be found for us. Here are the minor virtues. Where is the job?

I have come very low by Saturday, my last day. I set forth with three ha'pence in my pocket, to tramp a stony London where no breadfruit grows. If it had been that South Sea island, now, every bush would yield the rudiments of a meal. The sickening cocoa in the cupboard has given out. The very loaf has come to its last crust. I buy a ha'p'orth of bread, take a swig at a fountain, and tramp the East End parks to kill time. It is a fine day; the grass

is warm and dry; and I have my favorite Marcus for a pocket volume. It is wonderful what depths of meaning I am able to read into him, with the help of a sinking at the stomach. The hours pass in languor, but hardly in pain.

As evening draws near, however, the subsidence reaches an abyss of discomfort hitherto unknown. To check its course, I turn into a Salvation Army shelter, and spend my last penny in my last slum meal. In exchange for it, I get a half-bowl of soup and a slab of bread. I could eat both portions four times over, of course, but the meal as it stands is a "stay." The soup is quite palatable, and of a consistency which makes it both meat and drink. In these establishments they never waste their time or ours with the offer of a choice between thick and clear.

The only drawback to my contentment is in the awful character of the surroundings. It is near bedtime, and those who have come to stay for the night are slouching to the lairs. What a gang!—the blind and the halt, street beggars, curbstone salesmen, the sweepings of the railway arches, of the Embankment, and of the parks. They eat like dogs. Their speech is even in more need of washing than their faces. Their clothes are often but bandages for sores. Their feet are sandaled with rag and string. It is string everywhere; the buttons have long since given out. Your tramp is tied in as many points as a Shaksperian swell.

I have never before come quite so near the lowest

depth. The fascination of it is such that I am half tempted to make a night of it, and see the horror out and out. It might throw precious light on the scheme in which an evil principle matches every good creation of its rival with a bad one on its own hook. These new chums are, perhaps, but the waste of the workshop that turns out Mayfair. Unhappily, I have not the money for my lodging; but I hit on a plan that serves almost as well. I get leave to see the dormitory as a possible customer, and I enter a room where, as it seems, a hundred coffins are ranged in a row. They are but bedsteads, after all. Each is really a bottomless box made of four planks, which has the missing part supplied when it is laid on the floor. As the hirer gives up his ticket, he receives his box, his mattress, covered with American cloth, and his coverlet of leather. He takes up his bed, and walks to a place in a row of coffined sleepers which looks like a trench of the dead. The slaves slept in still less comfort in old Rome; but then, Rome died of it, I have heard say.

The undressing is worse than the unrolling of a mummy, with all its accompaniments of offense. Some wear inner layers of paper, or of scraps of cloth or flannel in local application, which are but so many charms against the visitations of local pain. These unfoldings are multitudinous in their diversity, for, being without settled habitation, the nomad carries all his belongings on his back. Our vagabonds bulge with ownership, and some of them seem to strip quite thin. All that they possess in the wide

world is about them as they stand upright, and it has to be about them as they lie. They store the oddest items of personal property, some of them relics of wide travel or of gentle lives of old—books, bundles of newspaper cuttings, framed photographs, boxes of dominos, and packs of cards. A few fetish rags are in the inventory, with a portable music-stand and a baby's shoe. How they hide these in the daytime is a mystery; how they guard them at night is almost a greater mystery still. They pack them under mattresses, and thus put two layers—one of humanity—between the precious oddments and a thievish world. Rightly speaking, every single bit of trumpery is fetish,—useless but for its satisfaction of a sense of property,—whereby they hold on to the idea of a settled life somewhere on this side of the stars.

That sight finishes me, and without waiting for the stroke of midnight, as I should do, I fairly turn tail. I rush back to No. 5, lock the door, put the key in my pocket, and leave a line for the landlord: "Got a job in the country. Keep an eye on my room." Then I run straight home to Piccadilly, let myself in, bathe, feed, and sink into dreamless sleep until I open my eyes, next morning, on dear old Stubbs drawing the curtains and laying the cup of tea by the bedside.

BOOK II

XII

IT is now the fierce round dance of the London season. The step is the one named after St. Vitus. We whirl from Monday morning to Saturday night, and our genuflections of Sunday are pure refreshment of the joints.

My first care is to send to John street a few weeks' rent in advance. As soon as I have time, I will settle up there for good, and perhaps make Low Covey heir to my effects. I mean to keep the tin kettle, or some other trinket of the kind, in perpetuity. That 's for remembrance. But I have no leisure just now. Breathing-time is cheap at the price of the rent.

I hardly know how the mornings and the evenings make up the count of days. The "Post" has done its duty, and I have a diary full of engagements and a trayful of cards. What would you? It is the opening of the season, and there is hope for the meanest of God's creatures that has a line in the Red Book. Even the veterans find a pulse again, as they see the signs of summer in the Row.

Then, never forget, I have come back from the shades, and from shades of the old pattern—not so

much a place of torment as of the negation of joy. The main point is that I am on the move again among soft-spoken, sweet-smelling people, and that I have recovered my sense of the fitness of things. It is pleasant to know a spade for a spade, and not to have to use it for a teaspoon. Really, this Occidental scheme of affairs, at which I turned up my nose a few weeks ago, has been amazingly well planned. You feel as if you could go on forever, as in a Mohammedan heaven, without repletion and without satiety. Just when the country tires, up you come to town. And, wherever you are, what finely measured intervals of grave and gay! Great music, I call it, with its spring meetings of the turf, and of the learned societies, dress debates, five-o'clock teas. Oh, the show, the show!

I open the campaign with a sale at Christie's. I really did not mean to buy anything, yet I lay out four hundred pounds. Never mind; it is only my savings in John street. All that I thought I wanted was to hear the fall of the hammer, and to warm myself a little in the sun of art. Surely this world of paint is the world as it ought to be—nature corrected into harmonies of line and color as chief ends.

There are some capital bargains. Only two thousand odd for a peasant family saying their prayers before a ham-bone! It is a mere song for a ham-bone by Murillo. "Rustic Piety" is, I think, the name. "Venice the Golden," again,—you know that first-class work,—a paltry forty-five hundred in guineas! Where are the buyers? It is almost a knock-out. Such are the

accidents of a fine day in a sale-room. To miss these chances for fresh air is to buy that commodity at a guinea a gulp. The prize is snapped up by a dealer. By the twinkle in that dealer's eye, I could swear that he has a customer for it at six thousand down. Perhaps that very customer is at this moment idling in the park instead of attending to his duties as a connoisseur. So his debauch of raw sunshine has cost him over fifteen hundred pounds. Serve him right!

It is all over in an hour or two; and seven-and-thirty thousand sterling changes hands.

Mine is but a sketch for the larger picture, but it is signed by the Dutchman. Some boors are enjoying themselves in a cellar, in the John street of their day—

> When the good ale-sop
> Doth dance in their foretop.

'T is a marvel of balance, both in composition and suggestion. In the foreground, two swinish figures toy in bibulous love; in the background, another pair grip in bibulous hate. In the middle distance, they are mellowing for these exercises under the ministrations of a hag. And there has been no break in the continuity of these festive experiences for over two centuries, or, for that matter, for over twenty. Such pictures are good to live with. I mean to look at this one every day.

I hurry off after this extravagance, for I am due at a garden-party in the frozen north, by Regent's Park. The invitation is from a dear old friend, and I want

to meet both her and a crowd. It will enable me to pay fifty calls, or their equivalent, in half an hour; and each call is the recovery of a thread of life.

It is a pretty place—still out of town, though well-nigh in the heart of it as you look at the map. Why do we give this region nicknames? The large garden is railed off from the park, as the park is railed off from the city—oasis within oasis, and verdant to the last blade of grass. Nor noise nor squalor of London can find its way to the heart of this maze. They sometimes penetrate our outer defenses, but they never reach the keep. Our first line is a high paling; our second, a continuous shrubbery, deep and high. Paradise itself—arranged, I believe, on the same system of inner circles—could not be more snug. This, I fancy, is Lady Deever's happy thought in the gardening, for she is a pious dame. They have had the place long enough to make what they like of it; a generation more, and it will be an ancestral hall. The rose-garden beats everything else I know, except the great show-places. Indeed, it beats them, as it is never shown. It is a retreat or a pleasance at will—as melodiously quiet, at need, as the court of a palace in Ispahan. I have a fancy that it is easier to be good in such places than in John street. I am certain that it is easier to feel good; and morality is mainly an affair of sentimental states. Without effort we are all courteous, affable, urbane. The Deevers have managed to acclimatize some small birds from Galicia which are excellent substitutes for the nightingale; and just now, I am told, they are in full song. After dark you may

hear them piping coquettish defiance to the moon from impenetrable shades.

Our hostess confirms me in my fancy as to the spiritual effect of the surroundings. "I take all my anxieties to my roses," she says, "and they disappear. I call my three arched alleys 'Faith,' 'Hope,' and 'Charity'; and the lawn, with its background of leafy shade, the 'Peace that Passeth Understanding.' I defy you to cherish a harsh thought against any fellow-creature here. You feel the brotherhood of mankind—especially after they close the park gates."

There is not much of that peace this afternoon, but we have something in its place. The sparkling animation of all this sunshine, girl life, smart dressing, and well-turned talk is as good as the birds and the moonlight, in its way. The Peace that Passeth Understanding is just now laid out for light refreshment; and at a small portable theater, on one side of it, they are giving the children a dance of marionettes.

One meets a friend at every turn. I contrive to put off my account of the Caspian by pleading that I must not forestall my book. How much has happened since I went away! There is some slight feeling, I am afraid, about that change of a lord in waiting at Windsor. Wrayling was positively "excused from attendance." I am to hear all about it if I come back to this brier-bush in ten minutes, when old Lady Cautey will have got rid of a parcel of girls.

"Dear old Sinclair! *You* here?"

"*You* here; that 's the point. But it 's good to have

you back again. You can give useful information. Where 's the Caspian Sea?"

"Now, Sinclair, don't take the bread out of a man's mouth. Buy the book when you get the chance, and then you 'll know. And what 's your news, in the meantime?"

"Groom in waiting!" he says, with modest pride. "But you 've seen that."

"Congratulations. Just the thing for you. Life is earnest. By the way, is there anything in what they are saying about Wrayling?"

"Secrets of state, my dear fellow! Honor of the service! What do you take me for?"

"That 's all right. But the birthday list is public; and I hope there 's no harm in saying that I was delighted to read your father's name."

"Thanks. Well, though I say it, it was no more than he deserved. You 've no idea how he has slaved for the party. He nursed his corner of the county for four years, and brought it up, alive and kicking for throne and altar, at the general election. Not that we expected anything. 'Ware *omen*, if you do; it 's the surest way not to get it. Old Cautey says we 've got it because they could n't find a brewer—as if everybody had n't been a brewer some time. But don't you believe her. I really think it was done on its merits, so far as the dad was concerned. And what have you been doing in the Cas—?"

"Come off, Sinclair! Come off!"

"Oh, well; you 've missed lots of fun here, that 's all. They did us fine, up at Chester races, I can tell

you. Best house-parties I 've seen for years. I was at Appleby's, 'to meet the Prince,' if you please. Half the inner cabinet was at the Towers; and there was quite a respectable show of the Opposition at the High Butts. Our little fandango was rather stately. But they simply went the pace at the Towers. So they did at Raynor's. The Raynors have lived in France, you know, and they 're up to all sorts of little dodges to make their evenings go—scratch hops, jew-de-society—all that sort of thing. They had a funny little devil of a countess, who kept us all in a roar with her queer English and queerer ways—just as full of mischief as they make 'em. The Applebys borrowed her for dinner, one night—fact; and, what 's more, the Raynors lent her. Very nice of 'em, was n't it?"

"And what are you up to now?"

"Well, you know, we 've taken the shootings at Kirkodale—thirty thousand acres, half of it forest, and quiet as the grave. That 's something in these days, when every nice place gets infested with two-legged rabbits before you know where you are. No overcrowding—that 's what I say. We 've got the fishin' in the loch, too; you must come down. But when can *I* get down? That 's the question. Lord, Lord! give me five pairs of hands to hold it all. The world 's too happy, Charley; that 's what 's wrong."

"Oh, parts of it are all right in the other way. Heaven 's not so hard as you think."

"Look at this blessed week we 're in. Young Bellasy 's coming of age on Wednesday. Doin's at his place. With him at Eton, and must go down. Of

course he could n't come of age any other day. Wednesday 's the day before Thursday; and what are you going to do about the meet of the Four-in-Hand? I tell you, it 's just like working in mosaic—so many little bits to fit in. I don't think our set ever get a chance in life."

"Always slaving."

"That 's it. Sometimes, when I feel I can't lay hold of it all, I wish I was a 'bloke,' with four bank-holidays a year, and there an end."

"And yet, we are called the idle rich."

"'Idle rich'! Where would the poor be if we struck for a quiet life? I work ten hours a day inventing wants for myself, and work for them; and very often eight hours overtime."

"Just to keep 'em out of the workhouses."

"Well, not quite that, you know, between ourselves. But I can't stand 'idle rich.'"

"Ta-ta, Sin!"

XIII

THIS is all very well, but that report to the governor of the island! That report! As yet not a line done.

The sense of this neglected duty comes to me one morning as I lie abed. I am in a sort of waking dream of wonder as to what the deuce was the matter with John street—John street, now all fading away, like a vision of the life of sleep.

"Ring three times, please, and sing out 'Chawley' at the foot of the stairs." Lord, how it all comes back!

I still wake every morning as one might wake on the other side of the grave—on the right side, naturally. This old room, which I used to take so much as a matter of course, is now paradise. After John street, and especially after that last scene, what a change! Every bit of household gear seems part of the plenishing of an altar. The curtained and carpeted peace of the place is no longer a mere negative charm. I enjoy it, after the riot of sordid babble of my late back yard. I am grateful for Stubbs, and for the softness of his footfall on the Turkey rug, grateful because, for the first time, I am aware. Less than two months

ago I held such blessings cheaper than sunshine. All these multitudinous nothings of luxury and ease, bought in one idle moment and forgotten in the next, are now redeemed to consciousness. The Bond street tradesman recovers his rights of appreciation as benefactor of mankind. As I lie and blink at his boot-trees, I am distinctly observant of the fineness and polish of the wood, and of the precision of its shaping lines. The true need is, not to put Christopher Sly into the duke's chamber, but the duke into Christopher Sly's.

John street overdid it a little, I fancy, in trying to do without. That 's what 's the matter with John street.

But the point is my duty to my employer. He is entitled to an interim report.

I ring for Stubbs, and make a sign for writing-tackle. A table with all needful accessories is wheeled into its place in an instant, and adjusted to my recumbent posture.

That report!

May it please your Excellency:

I have now spent some time in the endeavor to execute the first part of your esteemed commission. (Query: "Esteemed" rather too much in the line of a tradesman's circular? Never mind; he won't know the difference. Let it stand.)

I have accordingly made it my business to see something of the life of the masses in circumstances with which it is needless to trouble your honorable council in detail. Suffice it to say, sir, that they are a poor lot in spirit, as in worldly goods. If I might venture to put it in that way, their condition illustrates the crime of contentment; the extreme folly of getting yourself born into states of acquiescence, or schooled into them by cate-

chisms; the danger of saying "That 'll do" of any of the lower haps of life. Undivine content has fashioned them. They voluntarily, or at any rate with resignation, live as nobody ought to live. A few of us excepted over here, whose boots are in trees, and whose minds are in healthy formulas, and, by heaven, the whole balance of the race are in a figurative three-pair back. (NOTE.—The houses here are built in tiers, and naturally you get farther from all that earth has to give as you get nearer to the sky.) They are all doing without; and the evil habit, beginning with their bodies, goes on to their souls—or put it the other way on, if you like.

Bayswater, one of our most elegant suburbs (marked in red on the accompanying map), is doing without, as well as John street (outlined in black as a typical mean street).

With the latter, it is this vice of renunciation running into social disease. If John street loses a button, it fastens its breeches with a skewer. I have caught it washing in gallipots, drinking from the teapot spout.

The way in which it does without in the apparatus of clean thought and clean feeling would positively shock your Excellency and the council if related in detail.

The plea is that John street is used to it. But suppose it got used to munching dirt instead of good meal bread? The other day I paid a penny at a Saturday night's fair to see a pair of savages—said, though I believe without warrant, to be neighbors of your Excellency in the South Seas—who ate earth to save themselves the trouble of raising a crop. I need hardly observe, sir, that it is no achievement in human progress to have learned to substitute this mess of geological top-dressing for good roast and boiled.

This will never do.

In the first place, from what I know of my late friend's account of the islanders, they simply would n't stand it, especially at the start. They have their own views of the mother-land, and with them it stands

for the one entire and perfect chrysolite of great and good.

It is all very well to offer people what you call the truth. How are you to get them to nibble, if you don't make it look appetizing? Besides, what is truth? The question is as fresh as ever to-day. The more amiable view is that such little imperfections as I have seen are all in course of immediate correction.

Here goes again, then!

May it please your Excellency:

(As before to end of first paragraph.)

The town rings, as it were, with preparations for the Jubilee, and the whole country is getting ready to keep this great imperial festival in a manner worthy of itself and of the object of the celebration. All classes have, consequently, been brought together in a manner hitherto unknown. My researches attest the existence of a limited number of the humbler sort whose circumstances are not all that could be desired. They seem to require aërating,—if I may put it so,—both with hope and ozone. This, however, I ascribe, in great part, to the way in which they are crowding into the metropolis on this auspicious occasion, and it is merely a passing inconvenience. We must imagine, sir, your own beautiful island suddenly overrun with persons in search of measureless content, from all the ends of the earth. There is just a little pressure on the cubic space, and on other resources, here and there.

This, however, only brings out the wonders of our mechanism of social ministration into greater relief. The law, the churches, the more fortunate classes, are all busy in their several ways; and when, by chance, they miss a case of absolute starvation, the press invariably makes it the subject of a paragraph, exhorting them to greater vigilance. And in all such cases, there is reason to believe, the unhappy sufferers are only those who have steadily refused to work.

No. 5 John Street

The energy with which the national industries are pursued is really remarkable. In contrast with the more leisurely way of providing for simple wants which prevails in your own community, it might strike your Excellency as feverish. With you, I believe, labor is joy in all its conditions and all its surroundings, an invigorating, ennobling exercise of the higher faculties, to which its votaries go as to a daily feast of the blessing of life. There is perhaps something yet to be desired in our community under that head—notably, I think, in the fur trade.

In my next I may possibly extend the scope of this observation to other employments. Meanwhile, I beg to forward to your Excellency, for presentation to the council, a few extracts from the public prints, which you will be pleased to regard as part of the appendix to the forthcoming and fuller text of the report.

I have the honor to be, etc.

Mem.: Pad with cuttings and a few illustrated papers, and type and post at once.

XIV

INNER at Lord Brentmoor's to-night. It is rather a cut above me; our paths have diverged since we left Eton. But travel is a great leveler; they all want to hear about the Caspian Sea.

Oh, this house! Its vast architectural spaces are as good as a picture by the Veronese. Man is the greater for his very littleness in the relation. It humors his whim that he deserves a world to himself. Nothing is more ridiculous, nothing more sublime, than to see a single figure mounting the staircase of the great hall. The footmen, I observe, escape the sense of nothingness by doing everything in groups.

Brentmoor is naturally a little blunt. No man's manners can match such a place—even to scale. You will have to give it up, one time or other. Those who are born to it wisely give it up at the start. As a boy, I remember, my host was as rugged as a clean-mouthed cabman. To this equilibrium of simplicity you attain in the highest reaches by mere pressure of opposing forces. It is but a habit of prudence, and it involves no moral effort of any sort. You keep still amid the wonders of your lot. Whichever way these

people turn, they have the pick of a dozen civilizations in art and braveries. The mincing superfine ways are for those who may still hope to make a fight for personal dignity against surroundings that give them a chance. We of the happy mean positively reek of such affectations. Brentmoor is as broad and massive in his effects as the Poussins on his walls. His wife is just as fine a fragment of a classic age. It is impossible to exceed her high-bred rusticity of style. She lets him call her "Polly" when no one else is at hand. By heaven, I am tempted to call her so myself —and die! She is as great a lady as the Townley Venus; her cards might bear the legend, "No frills."

We assemble in the long drawing-room. Well, well, I thought I was fairly proof against upholstery, but upon my word!

The point is that they have been steadily laboring at this for a dozen generations, until they have worn off the cutting edges from every impression of life. The pictures are as restful to the eye as the couches to the frame. The light—soft yet brilliant, brilliant yet soft—matches the pictures. The subdued manner of the owners, shaded in passionless repose, matches the light. The very bisque at the dinner-table—butter, with no bones in it—will, I have no doubt, match the manner.

Everything has been, as it were, unconsciously labored for the blend of contrasting effects. I like the alternation of Greuzes and Watteaus with hunting and battle pieces in which the very victims seem to enjoy the sport. The canvas is generally let into the

wall instead of laid on it, and it suggests stars peeping from the depths of a sky. Impossible to harbor a harsh or a distracting thought here. The harmonies forbid. The very carpets, with their thick pile, tend to promote the same mood of a naturalistic quietism that can dispense with faith. The great tapestried panels of the central scheme of decoration—

> The story,
> Proud Cleopatra when she met her Roman—

stand as a screen between you and the sound-waves of a troubled world. And to think that these few hundred cubic feet of space thus filled, and thus transformed, were once but the raw fog of a London marsh! Immeasurably beyond us lies all that is sordid, base, and hateful in life. Surely there are solar spaces between this and John street!

I look round to guess my fate for the dining-room; but a becoming humility makes it no easy matter to find a match. To raise one's eyes on some of these fellow-creatures is but to drop them again with a sense of the impossibility of attainment—perhaps not without a sense of relief. The dowager is, of course, for the colonial governor, or for the prelate. I cannot mate in fancy, so I await the decree.

We are all soft-mannered—I think I have said that. But did I say bad-mannered, too? It is a strange combination, and one must have been where I have been to understand it. There the manners are hard and good, as distinct from the soft and bad that prevail here. In John street we were coarse to each

other in the expression; but when we were not quarreling, the turn of phrase showed the utmost desire to oblige. Our yea was "Yes, mum," if our nay was "Go to blazes!" I remember the fine company style of 'Tilda's tea-party: "After you's manners," whenever we passed the plate. There is nothing of that here. We are as innocent of the minor forms—to sustain the comparison, I must not say as disdainful—as ruminant animals. A field of cattle could not be more mildly self-centered in its view of life. Needless to say, we never butt each other, as they sometimes do in the pastures and in the town pens.

Dinner. My fate is a quiet little matron of a sweet sedateness of expression, who obviously has something on her mind. Of course she is the only woman in the room who has not entered into my calculations. These unions of an hour are lotteries, like those of longer term. She sat near the door, overshadowed by a colossal Buddha in bronze, emblem of the peace ineffable which is the note of the whole scene.

For these ceremonial occasions Brentmoor has music. And why not? It is part of his state. A neighbor at table, who dines at court, assures me that the whole thing beats Buckingham Palace, and even Windsor. The plate is as old and as abundant as it is at the command dinners; the great dining-room is Hyperion to the satyr of their best in that line. It is well done, certainly, and it draws sighs of admiration from the seasoned veterans at the board. Here, again, we have that marvelous union of the opposites of power and repose which marks our whole manner

of life. The chastened glow of the walls, of the sideboard, the table, the damask, the service of Venetian glass, the flowers, the nestling lights, is perfect in the harmony of its contrasts. Invention in all the arts may vary the effect; it can never surpass. The Olympian home-coming after the visit to Okeanos must have been like this. So (if so well) was the table spread.

And the recorders:

> The wailful sweetness of the violin
> Floats down the hushèd waters of the wind;
> The passionate strings of the throbbed harp begin
> To long in aching music spirit pined.

Exquisitely chosen, these strains from the minstrels' gallery. Brentmoor waives the compliment in so far as it is personal: "My steward is a bit of an amateur."

Here again it is strength and softness, deep-searching chords, but the most finished lightness of play on the surface of the sensorial nerve. The notes are of the very essence of sound, like highly clarified oils wherein only the pure spirit remains. It is untainted spirit everywhere—sound without uproar, food without grossness, light without glare.

There is but this out of unison. For the life of me, I cannot forbear from estimating the items of the menu at their probable cost, and secretly fingering my cash to see if I have the wherewithal. It is a touch of nightmare, no more. I am again at the fourpenny ordinary, balancing coppers against cravings, and cuts of baked sheep's heart against slices of plum-duff.

The temptation to throw bread about becomes almost irresistible. I compound for it by rolling an invisible pellet between finger and thumb and flicking it at an archbishop designate near the head of the board. It misses him, and all 's well. Resuming my calculations, I find that by the end of the second remove I have but eighteenpence left out of a guinea—allowing for wines and the table charges.

A glance at my fair partner for the feast recalls me to my better self. She is pensive, as with the sense of sorrow. A word with her convinces me that if I had hit my archbishop I might still have fallen short of the unpardonable sin. I learn that he has supplanted her own favorite prelate in two things—the invitation to this dinner, and the vacant see. Her favorite, she thinks, must be the man for all England, since he is the darling of women in society. He ministers to this class of sufferers in a special service, held once a week in his own palace.

"Now, that is what I call a great bishop—a bishop who sees and knows. He does not offer all mankind the same meat out of the same spoon. He gives us exactly what we want; nothing heavy—just a collect, a hymn, and a few words of counsel; but the right collect, the right hymn, and the right words."

"And at the right time, too—just before dressing for dinner."

"Exactly. Such tact, such a sense of actual needs! I assure you, for the want of bishops like that, many of us are obliged to be bishops to one another."

"An amateur episcopate!"

"You must not laugh. It is very serious. Society has been shamefully neglected by the churches. It will be a bad day for them if they let us lapse. Where will be the subscriptions, and the example in the parishes? If we went farther, it is they who would fare worse."

"It might run into devil-worship."

"Oh, shocking, shocking! I don't mean anything of that sort. No; but many of us feel the need of special ministrations for special cases. Why are we to be told not to covet our neighbor's goods? We have enough of our own. It 's just like choosing a doctor; he must know your complaint. I sometimes think we want a new religion, but it seems unkind to say so. The clergy are so willing, so helpful, so well-disposed. I am a seeker, all the same. For the life of me, I can't help that. Call it mere woman's curiosity, if you like. There seems to be a lack of a something—a kind of—well, I can't quite explain."

"I think I know what you mean; a sort of—"

"Exactly. A few of us meet, now and then, to try to give it a name. We call ourselves the Seekers, for the present."

"And you go forth with your lanterns into the wide world."

"Oh, no! We meet in Lady Ridler's drawing-room."

What a chance! These drawing-room religions are a favorite diversion of society just now; and here, possibly, may be an opportunity of seeing one of the conventicles of the newest fashion. In comfort, I un-

derstand, they are beyond all comparison, superior to the old meetings on the hillside. I am exceedingly attentive to my little partner after this—all deference, all submission and studied respect. In due course I have my reward in her promise to procure me an invitation to a meeting of the Seekers on Wednesday next. The sole stipulation is that I "must not mind Lady Ridler. She 's very well meaning; and they do a great deal of good with their money."

Encouraged by this success, I am able to address myself with becoming spirit to the entertainment of the neighbor on the other side, a sprightly American bride. She has come here to learn to be a marchioness, and Polly has her in hand. The apprenticeship system may have died out, but there are other ways of picking up a craft. She has already joined the Primrose League, and she talks with a nice contempt of popular institutions. She has just spent three weeks at Brentmoor; the town house is to be the finishing-school. She wants but little more. I heard her speaking of "our ancestors" just now. In a fortnight more she will be ready to manage her half of an English county as though she had been at it all her days.

There is more work in it, I fancy, than she bargained for.

"He 's a tired man," she says of our host; "that 's what 's the matter with him."

"Yes; he owns three towns and I don't know how many square miles of country. No sparrow may fall in any of them without his knowing it. A dog's life."

"Why can't he make them own themselves? What right have they to spoil a man's rest?"

"Territorial magnate—duties—responsibilities."

"Territorial clerk of the works, I should say," laughs she. "I've seen it all. That place at Brentmoor is just a little government—board meetings, petitions, charities, audits, basketful of begging letters every morning—my!"

"It's the penalty of having to set an example."

"Oh, that's just lovely, that part of it. Lady Brentmoor has been showing me how to do it. I don't mind church twice on Sunday, but I do think it hard to be setting an example all the week. Guess you rather spoil folks if you make yourself too cheap. I've struck at the sewing-classes. I'm going to do it in a new way—drive round Tuesdays and Fridays in my new buggy, and let 'em take the example out of that."

"Don't you think you'd be happier in France?"

"The Frenchwomen are such prudes!"

"I thought they had such a good time."

"Gracious! When were you over there? Their young women are just as proper as your old ones. You two countries ought to swap grandmothers, and then you'd match."

The designate, I suppose, has heard of her from the duke, for when we are left alone she is his theme:

"Another American settler? Why not? We have a great deal to learn from America, especially in the management of the masses."

"Very dangerous example, I fancy," cries a voice from the other end.

"Not now," says the designate, in a tone of mild correction. "That was the America of the past. With the growth of wealth and the differentiation of classes on both sides of the Atlantic, the two civilizations have come to comprehend one another. They mean the same thing, I feel sure. Let us try to believe the best of everybody. A man may make a fortune there, and keep it as securely as he does here."

"Till they shoot him in a strike."

"I think I have heard," returns the good man, softly, "that the shooting is not always on one side. I speak with submission. But, I understand, property usually wins. I dislike the vulgar prejudice against America. Believe me, our discontented classes find no encouragement there. America is drawn closer to us every day by the bond of common social difficulties and social aspirations. There are more human beings to the acre in the New York slums than in the worst parts of Bethnal Green. It is a tie of brotherhood, in its way."

His look, his gestures, are apostolic. I think we all feel better men.

We break up at the usual time, the time at which a well-conducted person ought to go straight to bed. But I have contracted fatal habits in John street, and one of them is that I want a nip in a pot-house before retiring to rest. I turn into my club.

It is an improvement certainly on the institution in which I used to take my glass in company with Covey or the "man as kep' the live stock." Pure tessellated floors—one might eat off them. Great lounge-

chairs, upholstered in roan—how could I ever have been indifferent to such things? Soft-spoken waiters, with a manner that might qualify for the government of states—twenty years of a service that is perfect discretion, and never a hasty word with their betters! It is superhuman. They must redress the balance of overstrained self-control by beating their wives. Drinks, *suaviter in modo* as they slip down, *fortiter in re* when they get to their journey's end! Oh, the life of a swell!

The smoking-room is in full buzz. Two groups offer to make room for me, and I am beckoned from a distant corner. This is popularity; this comes of travel to the Caspian Sea. Parties and prospects is the subject. The House is still sitting, but there is nothing of importance doing to-night; and, besides, wanderers are within call. So here we are at the center of the movement, where the talk is of the things that never get into the papers. It is the gossip of the gods, and with the same average of edification. But we are all respecters of the professional secret of class. Never, never is it to pass these walls, save for other walls as sure, and above all, never, never is it to get to John street.

This is the great business—to keep the composition right for John street. The figures are carved for the view from the base—like those of the Parthenon. How majestic the whole gang of them—cabinet, government, legislature—as seen from John street! What dignity, what wisdom, what zeal for the public cause! And still, to hear their stories about one an-

other, or little Sinclair's stories about them! Oh, if Old '48 could play eavesdropper here for just half an hour, 't would fare ill with the tailor in their next bout.

Sinclair is trying to form a new party, but only a party to run over to the Grand Prix. It has already developed a dissentient. "What about Ascot?" cries a protesting voice.

"As if we had n't thought of that! Sunday afternoon, Longchamps. Evening, Paris; dine in peace, and be happy ever after till eleven-thirty. Midnight, train for Calais, boat for Dover, both special and both fast. Two trains waiting for you at Dover—take your choice, Victoria or Charing Cross—at seven-thirty Monday morning. Monday in town, and see about the coach for Ascot—drivin' down myself for the Nimrod. Tool you down in style. Tuesday, put you in the front line, gents, and do you well. We 've joined forces with the Centaur this year, and our luncheon-tent 's goin' to beat creation. Chef from Bignon's; service all solid silver—old Murgatroyd's. The Prince has promised to look in. How 's that, umpire, for the resources of civilization?"

"Why can't you stay where you are?"

"Got nothing to fill up Sunday."

"Dash it all, you 're as bad as that chap from New York who came over 'just to buy a toothpick.'"

"What are you laughin' at, Wrayling?"

"Because I 've got a better fixture than any of you."

"What 's that?"

"Our annual puppy show at Biston. It 's a little

late this year, but it 's worth waitin' for. We 're joint master of the pack, you know, and old Tom Sheldrake, who used to be with the Stapleton harriers, is one of the judges. Come, any of you that know how to behave yourselves, and I 'll show you somethin' better than all that parleyvoo. The kennel lingo 's good enough for me."

"I 'm good for the Grand Prix, Sinclair, if you 're sure we can get back in time. It 'll be a lesson in the beastly language, at any rate."

"You 're a good young man, Ridler, and will do well in life."

Ridler, as yet but a great unknown to me, is the neatest young fellow I think I ever saw, and that is saying a good deal in this smoking-room. He is the perfection of finish in the exclusion of the non-essential. His tailor and the others have made a perfect work of him, from head to heel, and he knows how to put his things on. If nature had looked after our garments, as well as after our skins, so would man have been clad. His manner is perfect, as well as his grooming. He has the good looks of youth and health.

"Who 's your friend, Sinclair? There was no sign of him here when I went away."

"That 's just it; we had to let him in, you know, as they let in the father at the other place. It 's the weight of metal that does it."

"And who is he?"

"Young Ridler."

"Yes, I know; but who, what, and when?"

"Son of Sir Marmaduke Ridler, Bart., M. P.; Sir Marmaduke; lieutenancy of the city; high sheriff of his county; churchwarden of his parish; patron of a dozen livings; and any other blessed thing you like —or, at any rate, anything he wants."

"You don't say so! Why, I 'm going to a meeting at his mother's house."

"Of course you are. Everybody has to go to his mother's house, or to his father's racing-stables, or to his father's son's polo-parties. You know what they were?"

"Not a bit of it."

"The boy 's all right—Oxford, and even Eton. They 're going to try to put him through for the diplomatic service. Grandfather sold things over the counter. The father 's some tremendous pot in the financial way, and got his baronetcy for a royal visit. He 'll get his peerage in time. Ever met him?"

"No."

"Fearful old bounder, but there 's no keeping him back. He 'll get through anything by the sheer crash of his broadside. Gives the lad seven thousand pounds a year pocket-money, with the understanding that if more 's wanted there 's more behind. 'In things essential don't stint,' is his simple rule; and the one thing needful here is pace. The Ridlers have to cover a long distance in a short time. They 're all working at it, you know; that 's their strong point: the old man with his patron-of-the-turf business, and all that sort of thing—he 's making frantic efforts to win a

Derby, and I 've seen him with my own eyes in the royal drag; the old woman with her religious meetings; the young 'un with his real style in going about town. He 's the best of the lot. He does it for the fun of the thing, and does it like one of us."

XV

WEDNESDAY, and the new drawing-room religion, at three sharp.

I am informed by a person who follows these movements with attention that most modern faiths are started in this way. You think out your gospel by yourself, and then put it under the patronage of a lady of quality. It saves the great loss of time involved in wandering among the rocks and caves of the early dispensation. The person of quality lends her rooms—with the windows open or the fire lit, according to the season; double knocks at the door announce the disciples; the prophet is in the big arm-chair; there is tea at five.

I have made inquiries about my amiable hostess, and I find that she keeps a sort of open house for believers of beliefs. All are welcome, if only they have something to say for themselves, and do not damage the furniture of the drawing-room or the foundations of society. I have known ladies who extend precisely the same hospitality to the advertised medicines of the day. They can never deny the compounder the right to put just one bottle into the system, as evidence for flavor, if for nothing else.

No. 5 John Street

To-day we are led by a Brahman, imported at some cost from the banks of the Ganges. I apprehend him, as I enter, merely as an impression of spareness and youth in whitey brown. I advance on tiptoe, on an intimation from the footman to make as little noise as possible. There is a twinkle in that footman's eye; and I feel that with the slightest intimation on my part of a readiness to waive the difference in station, there would be a wink. The adepts, I observe, sidle in like well-trained mutes; and I can but follow their example. Some twenty persons sit round the room, with their eyes fixed as though in a trance.

It is, as I afterward learn, the hour of meditation in a new experimental service of worship by the will. You fix the thoughts—at first on any little thing for practice; then on a greater. The class is at present engaged on a tulip in a Venetian vase. By this means the Brahman leads us gently to the outermost courts of Nirvana. In spite of the outward symbol, we look within, and there we may hope to find Om. Silence is a first condition. You enter without salutation, and the only sound heard from first to last is the rat-tat of the knocker—to be deadened in future, I believe, by the application of a kid glove. On the present occasion our time allowance is but a quarter of an hour. We are as fretful as babes whose regimen of quiet must still be adapted to their appetite for noise.

An Indian colonel, who has manifestly been brought here by his young and pretty wife, looks uneasily in his hat, as at church, until the magnetism of a stern glance from his custodian compels him to fix the

flower with his wandering eye. He is well groomed; the three other men with difficulty check a tendency to long hair. The women, who form the majority, seem to glide gracefully into trance the moment they take their seats. When time is up, the babu speaks to us in English undefiled. His theme is "The Right Knowledge of the Royal Mystery." We like it the better, I fancy, for being a mystery, and better yet for being royal. We hear of Krishna and Arjuna, and the blessed Mahabharata.

Then they bring in tea. "Attention" gives way to "stand at ease," and the meeting dissolves into worldly buzz.

I am presented to my hostess, Lady Ridler. Her acquired manner seems to need time to mature into the incivility of instinct; but she does her best. She leads me to the Brahman, after a whispered insistence on the altitude of his caste. He has somewhat fallen from it, it appears, in coming to us; but our need is urgent, and he knows how to right himself.

"Don't be hurt if he refuses to take your hand. Our touch is defilement for him. But he means no offense."

"No carpenter's son, this one?"

"Oh, no. No more than the other. Excellent family, both—read the genealogies. You must have men of family for work of this kind. Buddha's father was a king."

I have but a moment with our leader, for others wait whose fervor gives them a better right. A most charming person, who follows me, desires to consult

him on the propriety of drinking a glass of claret at dinner, in compliance with her doctor's orders. Will it be likely to impair her powers of meditation, to bar her way to the comprehension of the OM?

"You know our rule," he says sweetly: "half of what can be conveniently taken. The great point is to lose the intrusive consciousness of the possession of a material system. If you eat too little, you have that consciousness through hunger; if you eat too much, you have it through repletion. You do not want to have it either way. It is an inferior, and must not thrust itself into the presence of its lord."

"Ask him about your cigars, Arthur," whispers the colonel's wife to the colonel.

"I 'll be damned if I do, Clara," whispers the colonel to the colonel's wife.

The Brahman is treated with great consideration. In deference to his supposed dread of defilement, skirts are gathered up, as he approaches, lest one should brush his robes. Lady Ridler is particularly civil to him. A few look longingly at his brown hand, yet none dare offer to sully it with the touch of a palm of white. He is extremely interesting in my eyes, as a sort of searcher for the new philosopher's stone. The old seekers were for turning everything into superfluous gold. This one is for the transmutation into perhaps equally superfluous spirit. There is, I hear, a whole modern school of them. A drawing-room or a public hall is their laboratory, a tea-cup their crucible. But they are quite capable of working without apparatus, and most consistently so; for appa-

ratus is but a form of that intrusive materiality from which they are to show us the way of escape. With a bare word in season they will undertake to reduce the whole glorious show of things into the ether spray of ideas. Their search is perhaps just as futile as that of their forerunners of the forge and bellows, but it must be owned, to their credit, that they make very little mess.

The presentations naturally include several rival practitioners in the arts of regeneration. One dame is the author of a scheme for bringing the higher culture to the workingman by means of free, and conceivably snuffy, lectures on the Pentateuch and other burning questions of the time. This scheme has been handsomely endowed, and I have the happiness to learn that the larger hall will be open by the end of the year. The idea is to let Spitalfields know what Germany thinks of the Mosaic cosmogony, and what Oxford thinks of both.

"It is the only way to counteract the socialists. The working-classes must have intellectual leaders; and if we don't give them the best, they will get the others."

"You have often met the working-classes, no doubt?"

"Oh, yes. I make a point of doing so whenever the house is under repair. I had a most interesting talk, the other day, with a carpenter who was mending a blind."

The colonel's wife is for silence classes in the slums.

"Why not do for them, poor things, what we have

been doing for ourselves this afternoon--bring them together to think 'Om,' even if they cannot realize it all at once?"

"It is our bounden duty," I reply. "I have observed that some of them have a most astonishing gift of reflective introspection. They will stand for hours at a street corner, gazing into the vacancy of a hoarding, or of a tavern sign—gazing, questioning."

"Ah! and—who knows?—perhaps getting a response at last."

"Or a drink. Their disappointment, I fear, sometimes has a most demoralizing effect."

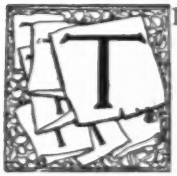
She sighs. "If only we could turn that longing into what the engineers call 'power.' My fixed idea—I cannot get away from it—is that we have no right to keep such things to ourselves. They belong to all."

"My own impression," I venture to say, "is that what we want is a new society of Shakers—a sort of active branch, whose business it should be to shake a stupid world, and one another, twice a day. The great need of the age is a good sound shaking, periodically administered, to get the nonsense out. Now, I cannot conceive anything more beautiful than an association of men and women bound to each other by this tie of essential service. You meet a brother, —I use the word in its widest acceptation, for I will never consent to shut our sisters out,—and, after proper greetings, you instantly proceed to shake that spiritual relative within an inch of his life. The deeper-seated foolishness is only to be dusted out of human nature in that way. Your brother thanks you

by requiting the benefit in kind. You salute, and depart on your several ways. I see immense developments—a great hierarchy of Shakers, composed of the strongest, who scour our cities day and night, and who are often generous enough to waive their right to be shaken for their own good. I see prophet Shakers, wild men of the woods, who rush up to town, from time to time, to shake the court, the camp, the mart, the grove—men in sheepskins, who bear down on the Royal Exchange at its high hour, and shake it into incipient paralysis; Daniels, Hoseas, and Habakkuks of Shaking, mounting pulpits and giving Mr. Dean a turn just when he is midway between his text and the luncheon-bell, or forcing their way into the courtly crowd on drawing-room days, and paying particular attention to the dowagers, whose years leave them without excuse."

"There may be something in it," she says thoughtfully, "but it would never suit the present style of doing the hair."

XVI



HE Ridlers fascinate me. What a trio! Marmaduke of the millions, their respected head; his wife, the seeker after many things; his son, a veritable lad of gold. I have met this one a second time, but only as a guest at his father's house. Their way of life in one of the largest mansions in town is too narrow for him, and he is lodged in one of the still larger hotels. He has his suite there, his servants, his right to entertain without a week's notice to the cook. Sir Marmaduke pays.

Sir Marmaduke is on his way to a peerage. There can be no doubt of it. He is the modern natural leader. How silly to sneer at ennobled drapery, or at ennobled malt! These, as means of wealth, are means of power, and power has ever been the thing that counts. It was war of old time; it is business now: only the forms change. And how quick the changes! Two generations ago a Ridler bent over the counter in a small general shop, and humbly inquired, "Next article, please?" of a slut with threepence three farthings in her purse. To-day young Seton Ridler holds his own with the best bloods of the Row—in all the

essentials of mastery, indeed, the best blood of them all.

The old way of knocking people on the head no longer leads to advancement. I have seen it in its decline. I remember taking a stroll in the Whitechapel shambles, one "killing day" while living at No. 5. A slaughterman came out to drink, as the woolly spoil of his knife might have come, had the broad street and the gin-shop reverted to their original condition of meadow and running brook. Never shall I forget the figure. It smoked with slaying. Steam went up from it as the long blue garment caught the chill of the outer air on its warmth of blood. It dripped with the telltale fluid in red gouts. It was greasy and sticky with the same, from heel to crown. I followed my man into the tavern with the fascination of horror, and furtively watched him the while he took his quiet glass. I was haunted with the idea that I had seen him before. But where? Why there, of course, in the Temple Church, lying cross-legged on the pavement in effigy, or wherever else brass or marble preserves a memorial of the warlike dead. His smock had the exact cut of a coat of chain mail. He was belted like a knight for the carriage of his swinging steel. His cap was but the old fighting head-piece in a softer stuff. His sewer-boots were a trifle heavy for the stricken field, but they were justified by the fact that he had no resistance to expect. Exactly so must the smartest founder of a line have looked in working-hours, when he toiled in the press at Hastings, and before he was cleaned up

for history by his serving-men, the painters and the poets. He must have looked so, aye, and smelt so—puh! for, not to put it offensively, I dare say he matched this latest of the slaughtermen in the stink of his trade. War is this, I felt, and this is war, and ever shall be, in spite of the serving-man with the quill and of the other lackey with the brush. Thereafter, in every picture of the age of chivalry, I have seemed to see, as in some effect of spirit photography, a pailful of offal in the background, and a whole foreground slimy as the edge of a duck-pond with something that even the ducks could hardly get down. As my man, having swallowed his draft, labored back with heavy footfall to finish his day's work, I felt that I had before me, in epitome, the pageant of the fifteen decisive battles of the world. But this type grows belated, since it now hacks and slashes all day long for a poor couple of half-crowns, instead of having its reward in principalities. Your new founder of families is at the mercer's shop over the way, and as he measures a yard of calico he also measures a yard of land.

So, when I dined with Sir Marmaduke, I saw the father of our kings to be—at any rate, of the barons who are to lead us in council and in war. Other barons were at the board—mighty war-lords, who had won their spurs on the Australian sheep-farms or in the gold-fields of the Rand. One felt, by the look of their terrible faces, that there was no keeping them back. Nothing can stand against such men. They have that to give which is wanted by every

mother's son; and since they are masters in fact, they may just as well be masters in name. They need never hang their heads in the House of Lords. To do them justice, I believe they never do. They bear themselves as those who have come into their own, and stare down the stray thinker who has managed to slip through, as one who, properly speaking, is not in the game. They are even rather contemptuous of the others, whose mastery is of the older sort. A poor old peer, whose name has hardly been in the papers since the time of King John, assures me that they are distinctly chilling toward him, and that for real comradeship they will not touch anything earlier than George IV. They form their own set, and they admit to it from the outside none but those they regard as promising candidates for the same honors. Hence the vast significance of their presence at Sir Marmaduke's feast. His destiny, I believe, is so manifest to himself that he is now choosing his territorial appellation by the simple process of writing out names of places on a sheet of paper, to see which gives least trouble to a hand beginning to feel the twinges of gout.

Young Seton, his heir, is a lad of three-and-twenty, of the new type of dandy athlete, a personage at Hurlingham, as in the Row. He has positively no taint of the counter, if taint there is. The good old grandfather, whom they buried out of sight in a remote churchyard on pretense of laying him at rest in his own native place, and very deep on pretense of giving him a gravel bed, was, I understand, counter unadorned.

Sir Marmaduke has manifestly been there; you can say no more. But the traces of his sojourn are growing faint beneath that polish of the world which is not exactly vernis-Martin for transparency. His son might have done nothing for seven hundred years, such the calm of his manner, the unhastingness, such his tranquil and unobtrusive satisfaction with himself. This he owes to temperament, and to what Sir Marmaduke calls the best schooling that money can buy. He means the best tarts at Eton, and the best wine-parties at Oxford. The lad's hampers from home are still a tradition of the seminary by Windsor Towers. In all the niceties of taste proper to an exalted order, Seton is now as good as to the manner born. He nothing common did, nor mean, upon the memorable scene of Balliol. Selectness is, or was, the first and last note of the whole place, no matter in what domain. Some are choice in the cut of a covert coat, others in the facture of verse or in theories of depravity. To have to run with the herd in virtues, vices, accents, or even in the very fashion of bowler-hats, is anathema to them. The panting bounder from without toils after them in vain, as they feel his hot breath and turn to something new and strange. Good physical training has made this youth as hard as nails, yet in some points he is fastidious to effeminancy. He had rather starve, I believe, than eat his soup with a plated spoon. It is not extravagance for its own sake; still less is it ostentation. All he wants is that everything shall be "just so."

So he is still poor with the seven thousand pounds

a year which Sir Marmaduke gives him in fixed allowance and without question asked. The father knows it, and his sustaining hand is there at the cry for help. The help may be given in specie, or it may be given in kind. The young fellow has both his own little private stud and the free run of the family stables, lest he should ever be hard pushed for a mount for himself or a friend. The parental yacht is at his entire disposal at stated times; and at others he is permitted to nominate for invitations to sailing-cruises. For matches the crew like him better than his sire. He offers a more liberal largess as the reward of victory; and without such encouragement victory is not to be had at the hands of these pampered menials of the seas.

He never touches a card. This and temperance in drink are his principal virtues. He "puts a bit" on his skill in the sports that please him. He rarely passes an afternoon at the Gun Club without standing to win or lose five-and-twenty pounds. He has limited himself to that sum for the sake of being reasonable. If he wins, he has had his pleasure for nothing. If he loses, he has but paid the market price. He will put it as candidly to you as you please—show him how it can be done on less. Pigeons may be killed, of course, with a pop-gun in a back-yard. Thousands are killed daily by simply wringing their necks. But that is sport for poulterers, and he would like you to be serious when the talk is of serious things. He has been known to shoot pigeons when he had only a ten-pound note to spare; but he avoids

it, for his maxim is, "Never starve the game." He is for moderation in all things as the true secret of enjoyment. At the billiard-table his risk seldom exceeds five sovereigns, except when he treats himself to a contest with a champion; and then the larger stake is but the fee for a lesson.

He is no wastrel; he only wants to have things "just so." There is a proper way of doing them, and there is a mean and shabby and inadequate way. When you are doing it in this way, leave him out, that 's all. He is no Corinthian patron; but if there is any difficulty in making up a purse for a glove-fight between really good men, who will keep at it till they die, to aid the digestion of the Stock Exchange, you may put him down for fifty pounds. The Stock Exchange likes it, as a form of the blood-bath which gives a fillip to the jaded sense, and is expected to do wonders for the moral anemia of the rich. It is, besides, agreeable in its suggestion of the potentialities of money. You may buy the bodies of men for one kind of entertainment, as the bodies of women for another. And if there is anything in the physiological theory of the close connection between lust and cruelty, the two pleasures are closely allied.

His polo is dearer; but that is only natural. It is a game for the gods. The eight or ten perfectly trained ponies are not to be had for love. The pick of them have cost him some three hundred guineas apiece. One, Saucy Sally, went up to four hundred; but it would have been a positive sin to let her go into any other stable. The others wanting to com-

plete the team averaged little over two hundred, so he saved on the lot. The housing and tending of them, with their costs of transit, eat into the money; but what would you? On a fine day at Ranelagh, or at Hurlingham, you have your money's worth. It pleases him to forget, if he ever cared to know it, in what subtle sense Actæon was devoured by his own dogs. They wasted that sporting youth's substance of riches, not his substance of flesh. The rest was probably but a tale of the nymphs who helped them in the process. But, after all, like Seton's ponies, they gave their devotee the "health and a day," wherewith a swaggering sage has promised to do all sorts of fine things.

Where is Seton to save on it all? He would like you to tell him; but he knows you can't. The polo, after all, is but exercise; and you would not have him take a walk round Berkeley Square? The touting tradesmen, no doubt, fidget him a bit with suggestions of ever new possibilities of perfection. They are always calling at his place, with new ideas in costume or in jewelry which it seems imprudent to ignore.

"And if he does fool a little money away," says Sinclair, to whom I am indebted for these particulars, "it all goes for the good of trade. Circulate the wealth. You can't go wrong there. Can you, now? Whenever I go to church for a charity sermon, and hear about poor people starving for want of the money to buy a penny roll, I wish I had six stomachs to hold as many meals. Dash it! We must think a little of other people, after all."

XVII

HIS way of life suits me. It is still as fresh as if one had been brought into it by an advertisement for next of kin. Let the wind blow whence or whither it listeth, it is ever laden with balm and spices for us. What centuries of quietly organized effort to make it so! Bless the piety of our founders. Amen!

The hazards of a day seem all in favor of the man about town. Take the hazards of this one. I set forth just to ask young Seton a question, which, by the way, I forgot by the time I reached his rooms. It has turned out one of the pleasantest days I ever spent in my life.

I have taken to Seton; I think he has taken to me. It has been a sort of friendship in the bud since our meeting at his mother's dinner-table. At our parting he asked me to call at his hotel.

That stupendous hotel! It overlooks the river, to say nothing of the English Channel, which, I should think, must be visible from the upper floors. I forget the count in hundreds of bedrooms, in halls fit for the banquets of Belshazzar, and saloons after the palaces of Ind. Over a dozen lifts, I believe, are at

W. E. GLADSTONE, FROM A PAINTING BY SIR JOHN MILLAIS.

GLADSTONE,

HIS CHARACTERISTICS AS MAN AND STATESMAN,

By his Friend

JAMES BRYCE, M. P.

NO one is more competent than the Hon. James Bryce to review the wonderful career of England's great statesman. Mr. Bryce, author of "The American Commonwealth," "Impressions of South Africa," etc., is not only a trained writer, but he has been a close friend of Mr. Gladstone for many years, serving with him in Parliament and in two of his cabinets.

The material for the book was gathered several years ago. It has been revised within a few weeks, and will be found to be the very latest and best of all the reviews of Mr. Gladstone's career. It shows a deep appreciation of the genius of the man. It will be a classic for many years. In attractive binding, clear type, price $1.00.

Published by

THE CENTURY CO., NEW YORK.

it, day and night, giving the inmates a foretaste of their ascent into heaven. Rightly looked at, this is quite a devotional exercise, and it makes a capital substitute for morning and evening prayer for busy men.

The surest sign of my friend's social importance is that the doorkeepers remember his name. He has ceased to be a mere number; and in establishments of this size that is a patent of distinction. Hundreds come hither every day, hundreds depart; yet the place is as quiet as any other asylum for the insane. Thick walls keep the patients apart. To judge by the abundance of tapestry, there are many padded rooms. For the difficulty of finding your way in it without guidance, it is another labyrinth of the twelve kings. Three chamberlains in livery successively take charge of me as I pass from the hall to the private rooms. They transfer me from one to the other with looks of reverence; they take receipts for me in expressive glances; and Seton's own man nods a final acknowledgment of delivery intact as he opens the door of his master's suite.

The situation is a happy compromise between scenery and comforts. The inmate has not to go too far down for his dinner, nor too far up for his fresh air. He has a balcony to himself overlooking the river; and there I linger for a moment while his man takes in my name. On this summer morning it is a glory of rich blossoms, rising fresh from a tessellated floor, and shaded by an awning of white and gold. The florist's man suspends his finishing touches with some signs of confusion as Seton comes forth.

"Glad to see you. Excuse me for one minute. Atkinson, where do these flowers come from?"

"Jukes and Abra'ms, Coving Garden, sir."

"Tell Jukes and Abrahams I shall ask for my bill if ever I catch their man here again after nine. I will have all this done before I get up."

"It was done, sir," pleads the offender. "I was 'ere at eight, but I thought you might like a few Maréchal Niels, and I went back to fetch 'em."

"Give him half a crown, Atkinson, and see that it does n't happen again."

"All sorts of excuses, my dear fellow; you know what housekeeping is. I try to make the place air-tight against worries, but they steal in."

"The free pass of the microbe!"

"Ah, yes. I— Well, Atkinson?"

"Menicure, sir."

"Hang the manicure! Will you excuse me just for five minutes? Perhaps you might like to have a look at the rooms. The idea is, 'comforts of home, and conveniences of hotel life.'" And he hands me over to his man.

"One half-moment, Sir Chawles," pleads Atkinson, as the door-bell calls him away.

I wait for him in the balcony, and see the busy river and the bridges, and all beyond, as through a cutting in a hedge of paradise. The toil and moil are just in the right place to heighten, by contrast, the sense of peace. Seen from this distance, the carman's fustian is but a softer gray in the picture. The roar of the traffic, reduced to a murmur, is positively

soothing. The 'busman's blasphemy, the cockney vowel, cannot travel so far; no fumes of manufacture reach us from the picturesquely grimy Surrey side. All is movement without shock, an effect with no coarsely dominating note. Jukes and Abrahams have done their work well. The little post of observation is odor, coolness, and shade, all combined in one delicious impression of the "God 's in his heaven —all 's right with the world" of Pangloss and the stall-fed.

"You see, sir, we 've taken two sweets of apartments, so as to give us more room."

It is the voice of Atkinson. He claims his rights as guide, and takes care that no other utterance shall check its course.

"This is the breakfast-room where we stand—dinin'-room if Mr. Seton wants to have a few friends to himself. All the pictures of 'orses are portraits, done to order from Sir Marmaduke's stud by one of the first artists of the day. No expense spared; only do the work well."

This is promising: the hero, from the point of view of his valet, at last.

"Doors on that side—bedroom, dressin'-room, bath-room. Doors on this side—'all, sittin'-room, servant's room. We 're rather proud of Mr. Seton's set. Our own fittin's—movable; party wrote about it in the papers. Sheets, piller-cases, all solid silk, wove special for us, and, like everything else that touches 'is skin, sent to the wash right down to the south of France. We don't have anything to speak

of washed in this country, Sir Chawles. Too careless. It seems a pity, too, after what we read in the papers about the unemployed. But they 've brought it all on themselves. You could n't trust a English person to get up this kind of thing," and he holds up a pajama jacket of creamy silk. "You might pass it through a weddin'-ring. It seems 'ard that a man can't get 'is shirt washed in 'is own country. But that 's the English wukkin'-class."

"What 's all that machinery by the side of the bed? Does Mr. Ridler play the organ?"

"Little comforts, sir. Mr. Seton likes to 'ave things 'andy. This spring lowers the bed-rest, so as he can sit up an' read. Here 's his racin' calendar, and what not, and his 'Sportin' Times,' all in this little revolvin' bookcase. Writin'-table within reach. He can't study in the daytime. Touch that spring, and out comes all his writin' things. Touch the other, and there 's his whisky and soda, and suchlike, if he happens to fancy a drink in the night. That black knob would let off a bell right in my yeer, if I 'd forgot the tumblers.

"The bath-room took us a good deal of time. This is all ours as it stands, and we 've got the right to take it away when we leave. We 're tryin' aloominum at present—'ighly recommended. Mr. Seton likes to have things right; and we 've got this about jes' so. You can have pretty nigh every kind of bath you want here by touchin' the right sort of 'andle. These is showers. Them 's dowches and suchlike—'ot, cold, lu'warm, steam. The little jars is essences to freshen

up the skin. That yonder 's electricity. The same current 'eats the irons for the mustache.

"The dressing-room was what you may call a problem. There was no room for Mr. Seton's things, do what you would. We brought in our own rosewood presses, and lined the walls with 'em. Would n't do. That was what first made us think of takin' the other set. Now, I fancy, we are all right for the present. I keep this room only for the things in wear, accordin' to the season. The things in waitin' is in the next.

"The worst of it is, Mr. Seton don't give a thought to storage. The goods comes in from the tailors almost too fast to put 'em away. My poor 'ead!

"Then, there 's the body linen, Sir Chawles. It 's fearful, now they 've brought in the colored shirt-fronts, and all them fads in silk and fancy wool—Burmese floss, Chinese imperial dragon watered in the web. Oh, dear! Oh, dear! I hate the touch of the sticky stuff myself. Believe me, sir, I 've got to buy every shirt I wear.

"A fad every week at the 'osiers' shops," he adds reflectively, "that 's about the size of it; and if you don't watch it, a new rig-out for every fad.

"Sometimes I hardly know myself what Mr. Seton 's got. You might almost as well ask him. I get so moidered with it all.

"These glass cases for the boots was my invention. They keep the dust off, and show the patterns at a glance. He 's got a fancy for cloth uppers in the same style as his trousers. That means a new pair

of boots for every pair of the other things. The worst of it is, the moment the trousers go out of fashion, out goes the boots. The boots are growin' on us, Sir Chawles; and if they keep at it long enough, we shall be turned out of 'ouse and 'ome in that article alone.

"I wish, sir, you would say a word to Mr. Seton, if you get the chance. He 's the best-dressed man in town, by a long way. I know it, and I 'm proud of him. But I 'm hardly equal to the strain of it at the rate at which he orders things. One 'ead, to say nothin' of one pair of 'ands, can't keep pace with him. Last Chris'mas he gave me a boy to help in the brushin' and the rough part. But what 's that? It 's the plannin' that makes the work. Mr. Seton's got such an eye for color; and to match him throughout, right down to his very gloves and scarf-pin, in two or three suits a day, is a fearful strain on the mind.

"Excuse me—master's bell. That means he 's got his nails done, and is waitin' for you in his sittin'-room. We shall have his tradesmen 'ere presently for orders, and then he 'll be ready to drive round for his little commissions in town. Let me see! I think it 's polo this afternoon. I 'll go and pack the kit-bags. My poor 'ead!"

. . . . . .

"I fancy I came to ask you something, Ridler, but I can't be quite sure."

"Never mind; here you are, all the same. Do come and see the match."

"Wants thinkin' about."

"Look here," he says; "I 've just got to see a few tradesmen's touts, and to go my mornin' round. Then we 'll have lunch somewhere, and I 'll drive you down."

"I hate to look so far ahead. Mine is the wisdom of short views. Make the lunch the certainty, and leave the rest to take care of itself."

The hall bell sounds again, and again—softly, yet with the insistence that will not be denied. It is the levee *à la mode*,—old as civilization,—the antechamber filling with the panders of luxury who have come to lend a hand in the search for wants. The typical figures change, that is all. The led captain and the poet with the ode are missing, but their place is supplied by the showmen in wine, jewels, and cigars.

The last comer is from the fancy stationer's, and his business is to call attention to a new set of furniture for the writing-table, just about to be "introduced" by the firm. A case of *gris de Russie* leather contains note-paper in *vert de Vienne*, stamped with monogram or armorial bearings in your own colors. The penny postage-stamps are in a three-guinea box of lapis lazuli. The whole thing is described as a chaste present for a lady. All that remains is to find the lady to match. But there, for the moment, poor Seton sticks, and he can only promise to bear it in mind.

"Don't let in any more of these fellows to-day, Atkinson. We must be off."

"Beg pardon, sir; there 's a man waitin' from the

dressin'-case maker's with a present—order of Lady Ridler, sir, I believe."

"Why, of course; my birthday to-morrow! Forgot all about it."

The man comes in, bearing a huge parcel in brown paper, which he proceeds to unfold. It takes some time. Beneath the brown paper is an inner skin of tissue-paper. Beneath that, and as the heart of the mystery, lies a wonder of a dressing-bag in crocodile, which might assuredly have served Solomon for the return visit to Sheba. At the touch of a deft finger the bag flies open, to disclose a stupendous range of glittering superfluities of travel in solid ivory, solid silver, and solid tomfoolery of every sort. As it opens, a note drops out, addressed to Seton, and evidently in his mother's hand.

"Dear old mater!" murmurs the lad, with feeling; and as he reads I gaze.

The bag is of the new pattern—that is to say, the limited quantity of apparel it can accommodate lies in laager, four-square, of every kind of traveling tool. One side of the square is all bottles, built in massive silver from stopper to base. Another is in ivory-backed brushes almost heavy enough to resist artillery fire. The remaining sides are packed two and three deep with writing-pads, tweezer-cases, shaving-sets, and other miscellaneous gear. The mouth is lined with ever so much more. There are signs or suggestions of everything that the most exacting person might or might not want on a journey to the moon, except, perhaps, a four-post bed. The theory

of the designer is, I suppose, that you are suddenly thrown, with this bag, on another island of Juan Fernandez, and without the resources of the wreck. You are far away from hotels and matutinal hot water. What of that? Here is a lamp—solid silver, as before—for heating water for yourself. Presently you will want to build a hut or boat. Here are the implements, solid as ever, in this huge clasp-knife, which supplies even a saw for the timber, and in its other uses is at once a table service of cutlery and a stand of arms. When the big blade has helped you to carve your dinner, it removes the head of the savage chief. The heavy boot-hook may serve a second purpose as a shepherd's staff.

The shopman takes up the wondrous tale of contrivance as Seton finishes the reading of his letter. He lays out the articles, one by one, until they cover the floor. He lectures on their useless uses as traveling-clocks, match-boxes, purses, pocket-books, cigar-cases, and on their exceptional chastity of design, in its proportions of the pound, in costs of casing, to the penny in cost of contents.

"About the best thing in the market, eh?" says Seton, with evident delight in the rich and rare.

"The very best, sir."

"And the dearest?"

"You could n't have it dearer, sir, unless—"

"Unless what?"

"You had all the metal fittings in gold."

"Phew! What would that come to?"

"Fifteen carat, sir, or eighteen?"

"Eighteen, of course."

"We will send you an estimate, sir?"

"What does it stand at now?"

"A hundred and fifty guineas, sir, was what your lady-mother paid."

The things are still lying on the floor, and the three of us look not unlike a gang of burglars contemplating the night's spoil, when Atkinson announces:

"Mr. Popenough."

The rendering is, of course, entirely his, but it is close enough to show his meaning. Seton mutters a malediction on "that beastly Russian lesson" as an old acquaintance of mine stalks into the room.

It is no other than Mr. Azrael, the angel of death, lecturer on dynamite, and general mystery man of my John street back yard. This clears up one of his mysteries—his way of getting a living. He is evidently a teacher of languages; and childlike Seton, knowing him only in that capacity, entertains an angel of a quite peculiar pattern unawares. Luckily, the recognition is confined entirely to one side. The newcomer has not the faintest sense of my identity, and he meets my gaze with no inquiry in his coldly penetrating glance.

Yes; here is Mr. Azrael beyond doubt—the tall figure, clad in threadbare black, the air of distinction, the small piercing eyes. I have to realize him to myself more fully this time. The stamp of his personality is a combination of pedant and thinker—of fanatic, too; but that is really his mode of the pedantry. A dead, pitiless obstinacy is written all

over the face, with its high cheek-bones, its rigid lines, the contraction of its regard, which is as though some original breadth of human sympathy had been beaten into one thin straight line of purpose. He looks at once intellectual and narrow. It is no uncommon type. It runs all through history, and varies only in its incarnations. Sometimes it is a Spanish inquisitor, sometimes a Genevese Calvinist, and sometimes the man who tried to exalt Westminster Hall to the skies.

A cold fanatical fixity seems to be his dominant note. I describe him first by his expression, by his spiritual significance, rather than by the actual ways and means of form and feature. It is the natural order; we always apprehend faces in that way. They are at first meanings to us, whether right ones or wrong, and only after that combinations of shape and color. I may have formed my opinion of him because he has a high, narrow brow, but I was aware of the estimate before I was aware of the brow. His baldness and his still vigorous middle age come somewhere into the reckoning, but I cannot fix their place in it. A scar on his hand,—as though from a sword-cut,—which has turned his little finger into the likeness of a little toe, has doubtless its part in the effect. Of one thing I am sure: he is of the great Puritan species, which in its innumerable varieties has had so large a share in the making and marring of the world.

Seton's blunt, not to say brutal, English way with him offers a contrast which, beginning at men, runs

on to manners, civilizations, social states, and, in fact, never stops.

"Oh, Mr.—Mr. Poff——, so very sorry, but I can't have the lesson to-day. Game of polo, you understand—though I believe you have n't got it in your country. Atkinson, give him his money, and fix it for next week."

And the golden youth turns his back on his instructor, without any intent of discourtesy, but simply to look once more at his mother's gift.

Mr. Azrael is looking at the gift, too, and from it to the owner, and, indeed, to all of us, with a significance which is perfectly apparent to me beneath his mask of calm. Seton's manner of dismissal has clearly stung him like a cut from a thong. But, manner or no manner, he no less clearly includes our whole company in one vast, all-embracing, and all-sufficing sentiment of class hatred and contempt.

"Yaas; I come next week," is all he says, as he, too, turns his back on the scene, as though by word of command, and marches out of the room.

"I 'm afraid you 've hurt his feelings, Ridler."

"Oh, not at all. You don't know him. He is always like that. Rum beggar! Never speaks a blessed word besides what 's in the lesson. Like a machine. Comes and goes by his watch—never a second early or a second late. I like his style. His business is to sell you an hour's Russian or an hour's French for three half-crowns. Well, there 's the article; have it or leave it, without any waste of words. You can get on with a chap like him. Bless you, he does n't

mind being sent away. How can he? He gets the coin. I often have to pack him off like that. Can't find time for it. It 's the most blessed nonsense, the whole thing—a fad of my good mother's—diplomatic service and all that rot. I don't mind fooling about with him to please her, but I won't go to a coaching-mill. They say he is a first-rater,—college professor in his own country,—but had to bolt because they wanted to send him to Siberia. That 's where they send most of 'em, I believe. Bolted from the infernal lingo, I should say. You never heard anything like it; and as for the writin'—"

XVIII

TKINSON now comes in to put the finishing touches to his master for the morning promenade. He brings half a dozen cravats, and a whole trayful of scarf-pins of price. Seton is to choose. He does it swiftly, yet with care: puts a forefinger on a scarf of quiet gray; then, again, laying it on a perfect pearl, not too large, retires to his dressing-room, followed by his man. When he reappears, it is as the finished product of civilization. He is booted, hatted, gloved, and generally carried out in all details of a perfect scheme. The pearl is not only rightly chosen, it is rightly placed. It could not have been anywhere but just where it is, and no other would have served in its stead. He is simply "right" from top to toe. His valet regards him with the pride of the stableman who has just drawn the cloth from the loins of a flawless horse.

"Cigarettes, Atkinson, I think. Put the cigars in the bag."

The cigarettes are in a tiny case of enameled gold, which bears an "S" in inlaid diamond points on the lid. It suggests a despairing effort to redeem precious

stone and precious metal from the contempt cast upon them in the extremely apocryphal narrative of Master Hythloday. Here, at any rate, are uses of a kind.

The young fellow holds out his arms like an infant waiting to be dressed, while his male nurse unbuttons his coat and stows away the case in a breast-pocket. This done, baby is buttoned taut again into the statuesque lines of the "cut." Can anything be wanting now?

"Which cane, sir?"

"Let me see!" and he turns to a suspended rack at the door. There are as many canes as scarf-pins. He hesitates between a trifle in snakewood, with a handle of tortoise-shell, and a slender growth of some other exotic timber, capped with clouded amber almost as pale as the pearl.

This carries it at last, and not a moment too soon. Now we are out of doors and skimming, in Seton's private hansom, over the well-watered roads. On and forever onward, until we reach the flower-shop in Piccadilly for the morning buttonhole. Shade of 'Tilda! not a bud but would outvalue your entire stock. There is the same niceness of selection here, with the same certainty of operation. Our dandy looks at a whole parterre, and points to one bloom, like the chess-player who knows that he is pledged to the choice by touching the piece.

It is pinned in its place by a being with a waist as fragile as its stem. The being makes an entry in a book, and the office is at an end.

"What does that stand you in, Seton?"

"Well, I don't know, you know. They put it down in the bill. They 're extremely nice people, and give one no end of tick. They 're supposed to let me know every time it gets up to fifty pounds."

"Settles," is his brief order to the driver, as we return to the cab.

It is a name of power, and there is no need to ask for explanations. He gives them, nevertheless. "I must see my snip for just half a moment. If I don't look in there three times a week, he 's sure to send me something I don't like. It 's only just round the corner."

And so it is. The great man, with whom I have had dealings myself in my golden prime, is, if possible, more serious, more urbane, than ever. Seton has so much the use and habit of the place that he passes at once to his favorite private room. A lay-figure molded exactly to his shape ("Mr. Seton's model" is the official description) stands in a corner, clad in his latest suit. The lugubrious effigy is a model for clothing only, so its representative functions stop short of the head, which is but a block, and of the feet, which are but pedestals of iron. The rest is Seton to a hair, in shoulders, waist, and hip.

"I want you to see that trouser again, sir, as a match for the frock-coat. In my idea, you 'll never like it; it 's a couple of shades too light."

"Split the difference to one shade, Settles, and I 'm of your opinion. If I don't call to-morrow, send the patterns round. Atkinson will let you know my hours. But what 's wrong with the scye?"

The melancholy shape has developed a crease in its dorsal region, and Seton points to it with accusing finger.

Settles touches a bell.

"Who dressed this model?"

"Blundell, sir."

"Send him to me presently. A clumsy valet, Mr. Ridler, that 's all"; and with two deftly nervous pulls from the master builder, the crease disappears.

"It is n't merely knowing how to make clothes, sir; it 's knowing how to put 'em on. You 've a treasure in Atkinson. Then, there 's the wearin' 'em; and of course this poor dumb thing is no use there. You and Captain Bransome are the only two gentlemen that can take a coat through a drawing-room crush as if it was on the model's back."

"Not always, Settles, not always. I was n't very well pleased with the behavior of that gray cashmere at the garden-party."

"Perhaps you stretched yourself in it first go off, sir. It 's as well to break 'em in a bit gently to the harder work."

"Perhaps so, perhaps so," says the youth, absently, as his effigy is spun round once more, till it stops with its breast to the light. "I don't like the fall of that black angora, Settles. We 're still at sea."

"You 're sure it is n't your fancy, sir?"

"Nothing of that kind, certainly. We 're wrong in the facts."

Then there ensues a most amazing discussion of experts, in which the dandy holds his own in fair

give and take of technicalities with the snip. It is as a dispute of the more abstrusely learned on any other topic; the vulgar can but stand by and wait in patience for the end. Such Mesopotamian terms as "fore part," "side-body," "middle shoulder," and, again, the triply mysterious "scye," are freely bandied about; and the tailor manifestly bends to his task, as one in competition with a master. From time to time, Seton seizes the chalk and makes drawings on the garment, or makes the figure spin like a praying-wheel. In vain is the cutter summoned to reinforce the head of the firm. On the question whether a back seam should be convex or straight, our young blood takes a pair of them without yielding an inch, while the staff gather about the door as though to catch glimpses of a well-stricken field. There is peace at last after victory; and victory, I take it, is with the challenger, since the other cries, "Sir, what a tailor you 'd have made!"

"Self-preservation, Settles; I 've got to wear the clothes. Besides, I have n't passed half my life in your shop for nothing."

"Yes; and the half-lifetime is better than the full one, sir, if you want to keep your eye true. You come fresh to it every time. We 're worrying over it day and night."

"Till you can't see the wood for the trees. Just the same with the painters, I 've been told. Besides, two heads are better than one."

"When one of 'em 's yours, sir!"

"Thank you for the compliment."

"I hope we shall see you to-morrow, sir; we want all the help you can give us."

"I 'll try to look in. We 've a good deal to do between us in the next few days, if I 'm to be fit to be seen by the 1st."

"Chancery Lane, and look alive," is his order to the driver, as we sink back into the cab.

"A little out of our way, but it won't take us long. I want to see Myams about a small advance. Fact is, I overshot the mark a bit in buying that last pony; but I could n't let her go. You 'll see her presently, I hope. Best bit of pony-flesh in all England, I flatter myself—bar none. Hullo, there he is! Just my luck on the right side. Save me going up-stairs."

An exquisite person, in dress and mien, is picking his way toward a doorway; and, with a word to the driver, Seton contrives to intercept him on his threshold. Their greeting is friendly, yet distinctly respectful on the side of the money-lender, whence I conclude that they are yet at the beginning of their idyl. Their business is settled in one short turn in front of the house.

The usurer is young, but he hobbles, perhaps congenitally, in his patent leather, like a knight in his mail. He nods and smiles, and makes an entry in his tablets, as his customer drives away. Seton bears himself with the passionless calm of the man who is a law unto his tailor. In that sort of governance, I suspect, Mr. Myams is merely a law unto himself.

"What 's wrong with him, Seton?" I ask, as we drive away, in response to a new order—"The Snack, sharp!"

"Nothing that I know of."

"I mean in his get-up. He 's well dressed, but somehow—"

"Oh, that! Too glossy, I fancy; that 's all. Takes the shine out of himself with his own boots. Silly things to wear, this hour o' the day. He means well enough, though; and he 'll find nobody to put him out of countenance down here."

The Snack is the young fellow's lunching club. The glory of its members is that it is known to but few, even in select circles. Its name never gets into the papers. There is no chatter of irresponsible frivolity about it, as there is about White's or Brooks's. It is an eating and drinking club—that, and that alone. You have to look for it in a by-street off Piccadilly. You may pass and repass without being aware that you have it under your eye. It will never be under your nose. You knock as at a private house, and are ushered into a café under the leads. It is Paris in every transplantable condition—waiters, *maître d'hôtel*, *dame de comptoir*, and plainness in non-essential things, including the lady herself. The napery is nothing but clean; the plate is not for pomp, but for use.

But the viands! Some of them, as the maître is so good as to tell me,—for I am here as the country mouse at meat with the mouse of town,—come straight from Paris by special hamper every morning. But few are of English production. The true master of the establishment, who is below, will not work with any

but his own materials. There is a small bakery, which lives on his custom, hard by. The butter comes straight from France: no English butter, it seems, will serve. Where France is not far-fetched enough, other lands are laid under contribution. The theory of the committee is that every land and every civilization has produced one good thing in eating and drinking, if no more. This good thing has been perfected by the labors and the sufferings of generations. The earlier have felt their way to it through successive longings, successive surfeits, successive indigestions, until it has been fashioned by the wisdom of sages, and the experience of men of affairs, into the accepted national dish. This dish must be accessible to the Snack. Vigilant traveling members scour the whole surface of the globe, and bring back word of new discoveries in this line. Committees sit on their reports, and test them in secret and self-denying experiments, in the hope of being one day able to offer them as glad tidings to the club. Select trading-houses import the ingredients for them, and are able to give you, in tin or in bottle, the lampreys that once cost a king's life, the goose breasts for whose sake the mightiest of man-eaters, in his retirement of old age, is ready to count the world well lost. In this way, and by slow and patient labors, the club has attained to a foretaste of that earthly paradise of the senses which the good Irenæus, in prophetic vision, promised to the early Christian church.

The young fellow has the perfect note in an extreme urbanity to all who are of the household of his plea-

sures. He can be as distant as a grandee, I imagine, to those who venture to enter into competition of style with him. But he treats his dependents as reigning beauties of the stage treat their dressers, or the fellow that opens the door. He chats with the substantial person at the counter, and calls the maître d'hôtel *mon vieux*. He has none of that fear of familiarity with the servants which is the guiding principle of young men from the country who have found their way into West End clubs.

We lunch lightly, for Seton has work to do; and the bill is but a fraction over forty shillings. According to my investigation of the priced menu, it is distinctly below the average. In fact, we have saved a pound.

XIX

IT is hey for Ranelagh now, for I can deny him nothing after this repast, and we bowl over the road to Hammersmith. There are many signs of tournament day—coaches with company, grooms leading the ponies to the lists. Over twenty teams have come from the meet in the park. It is a pretty sight. We exchange greetings with friends; and few but friends intrude. The road is ours, save for an occasional bus or tradesman's cart. At Barn Elms we have but to turn off by the Red Lion, and we are in our own ground.

It is holy ground of historic memories, if you choose to take it so. Ever delightful to me is this place. What I especially like about it is the ease with which one may people its lawns and glades with distinguished ghosts. They drop in upon one unannounced, and with no other introduction than the sight of a trinket or of a picture, or the mention of a name. Here is poor, proud Walsingham, hoping to get a word in edgewise, in furtherance of his suit for faithful service to her who could starve a fleet but never stint herself in new frocks. "While she is ther nothing may be moved but matter of delyghte." Cowley comes hither

for desert solitude, with his head turned to make sure that the world is looking on. Mr. Pepys is now and then at Barn Elms, as Noor-ed-deen was at the swept and garnished garden of the Mastabahs, for moonshine and for junketings—sometimes, while Mrs. Manuel sings. And mingled with their echoed lute-playings comes the clash of steel, as Buckingham debates with Shrewsbury under the trees in the logic of sword-play, while the middle term holds the horse. Old Jacob Tonson may now appear, with the Kit Cats in his train—Somerset and Dorset, Walpole, Congreve and Vanbrugh, Dryden, Addison, and Steele.

I must confess that, until I settle down to it, I could prefer these shadows of the past to the too abundant substance of to-day. Everybody is here, with the exception of the working population. But one must take it as it is. The high-bred throng is entirely sufficient to itself, and has no thought of vacating the premises. It is, after all, in a certain continuity of purpose with its forerunners. The place has ever been sacred to the pride of life, according to the fashion of its age. The Kit Cats, the swordsmen, the gossips, the poets, and the courtiers were one with us, as we stand, in their quest of the courtly fun of the fair. It was ever a far cry from John street to Barn Elms. Wondrous sometimes is the permanence of institutions in this world of change. Here, still for us and for ours, are summer's golden pomp, zephyr, and the plash of Thames.

Wondrous, too, is the transformation of Seton as soon as he reaches the ground. All the dandy is thrown

off, and only the athlete remains. Till now I had half feared it was a case of "so myche hardy dardy, and so lytell manlyness." He is the leading man of his team of civilians, who to-day engage the military. He gives sharp orders to his stable folk, himself sees to his saddle-girths before mounting, and, when all is ready, enters the field, in blue and silver, at the head of his contingent. It is a pretty sight, say what you will—the great stretch of green sward, and these curveting figures (the others in pink and white), the sunshine, the coaches, the carriages, the pretty women, the well-groomed men, the knots of trim servants, and the sweet sylvan peace brooding over all, for the talk is only a murmur in the vast expanse. The "immemorial elms" are as fully intent as ever on their business of distributing luminous shade, and they bestow it by preference on nooks and corners of the ground, where a Gray might still find all the quiet for a second "Elegy" while our sport goes on. These oases of primeval peace are known only to the water-color painter, or to the golfer, from whom no secrets of nature are hid. Oh, the beauty, the beauty of the world!

Saucy Sally, my friend's mount, is a veritable Arab queen. There is something to show for her cost. The shoulders are piled thick with muscle; so are the thighs. Loins and back and ribs have all the essential points, while for bone she is a tower of strength, as carefully constructed for strain-bearing as an arctic ship. Her crowning distinction is in the head, with its taper muzzle and the abundance of beautiful drawing in the jowl.

She vindicates her owner's judgment in the purchase without loss of time. He has the ball in play, with a hostile throng between him and his goal, and nothing but the pony's legs, his own arm, and the wit of both to take him through it. The legs and the arm are in noble rivalry. When it is Sally's business to adapt her pace to the dribble, she does it with the certainty of her reserve of strength. She turns and winds, to save her rider from rushes, as if she scorned guidance, though, for certain, she receives it by word and touch. She spurts for taps, and anon, with three men in full strain for the ball,—two of them in pink and white,—she wins it by the sheer speed of a sudden dash, and enables her grateful master to score a goal. Up goes the applause to heaven. Oh, but we are a happy field! And happiest of all of us must be the man in blue and silver on the Arab's back.

Seton's chief antagonist is a lancer lad, who rides a stone heavier than my man, to judge by his performances, and has well-nigh as good a mount. They are pictures, both, in their field finery, and the reins are as sensitive as hair-triggers under their touch. A back shot from this champion, in the late encounter, was going straight to its mark when it glanced from a pony's leg. The two men now ride in together, and by their gestures evidently talk horse.

They have fresh mounts for the next bout, for the last one winded the whole field. Seton is on Tickletoby, a sturdy little beggar who, as I learn afterward, has a will of his own.

The principal incident in the early part of this

struggle is the discomfiture of a dragoon, and a heavy one, who comes a crumpler at full speed. The iron-gray of the beast's coat, and the white and pink of the player's, alternate in a hideous false heraldry of sport as they roll over, until the pony helps himself to rise by planting a foot on the man. The whole expanse suddenly becomes still as death; the game stops; the grooms run toward the prostrate champion. But a miracle! He rises to his feet unaided, and unhurt. Then, with a shake, he makes straight for the captured gray, and swings himself into the saddle for the renewal of the fight, the while we thunder our admiration and our gratitude to him and to the sky. The bonny, bonny game of heroes—and of millionaires! Taking advantage of this pause, which has happily coincided with the ball's getting out of play, Seton orders another mount, and Fanny Fiddlestick, a second pride of his stud, enters the field. The discarded Tickletoby is led off in a kind of disgrace, which, for the present, is a secret between him and his lord.

The luck is against the dragoon. During a fierce mêlée that ensues, he gets an ugly cut across the face, and in an instant he rides in streaming crimson instead of the uniform of his side. But he rides on, for all that; and soon the luck turns, as though for sheer love of his mettle, and, amid renewed thunders of the field, he scores the goal. A pause for a change and sticking-plaster, and we are all like happy school-boys once more.

I miss the rest of it in its detail. I have been captured by Lady Deever for small talk, and henceforth

the game is registered in consciousness only by meaningless applause. The last and loudest shout warrants a question; and the answer to it is that the civilians have won by three goals to two, and that Seton's final covers him with glory for its courage and address. I join the hero in a peg after his cold tub, and soon we are bowling back to town. He declines a plain dinner with me, on the score of a prior engagement as host of a party for the play.

He is in capital spirits. It is the animation of perfect "fitness." The blood circulates at the right pace, and all the rest moves to its measure. He prattles about the game like a healthy-minded child. Did I see how he met the lancer's rush, till the two nearly fell out of their saddles into each other's arms? It was Sally saved him then. He would n't take six hundred for her, money down. There is a flush on the deep bronze of his face, and both tints are as rich and solid as an old master's masterpiece.

It is universally conceded that no nation excels our own in the power of limiting conversation to the something not ourselves, and keeping the mind for long stretches of time in the outer courts of circumstance. As a rule, we have nothing introspective in our talk, and but little that is theoretical or speculative. It is a token of our passion for privacy. Millions of us go, or seem to go, from cradle to grave on a mental nourishment of cricket, foot-ball, party politics, dress, diseases, or domestics, with never a thought of cosmic relations. Seton, as I have hitherto known him, is

one of these. He has no impertinent curiosity as to the means or ends of his being, or as to the mysteries of his lot in life. To-day, however, or rather at this moment, there is a change in him. He is discursive, and he shows a disposition to quit his few settled topics for the dangerous ground of things in general. This happens—by a coincidence only, I have no doubt—just as we come in view of the river at Hammersmith Bridge, with its loungers hanging over the parapet, its landscape of old and new, harmonized by the dateless stream, its detail of boats at their moorings, of flying skiffs and fours, and of the tramp bathing his bleared vision in the light of the evening sun.

"It 's a rum world," says my companion, as though making a cautious advance where there is no sure foothold.

"Aye, aye, sir," is my equally cautious reply; "a rum world it is."

"A funny sort of a place," adds the young man, as I think, superfluously; "blessed if it ain't."

"Just what I 've often thought," I return, willing to encourage him in the belief that he has priority in the expression, if not in the idea. No other priority is to be hoped for nowadays. Notoriously, there is nothing new, not even the proposition to that effect. Dr. Sangrado's patients swilled hot water as a panacea, just as we do to-day; and it was his pride to stand upon the ancient ways.

"Well, I 'm glad I spoke first," he laughs. He obviously needs most delicate handling at this point,

or, in the twinkling of an eye, he may relapse into the things he understands.

"But I don't see how you make it out, after all. What 's the matter with the world?"

"Who says there is anything the matter with it?" is his very natural rejoinder.

"*He* says so," and I point to the beggar at his bath of light. "He 'll say it again if he catches sight of us two swells."

"Lord! he don't mind; used to it. Been in training for it all his life."

I am far too shrewd to provoke him into silence by argumentative contradiction. His mood is everything; and, for one rare and precious moment, it inclines him to speculative confidences. I play him, therefore,—with what skill, though I am proud of it, I have no time to show in detail,—and gradually arrive at the following as his working theory of life and the picture of his inner mind.

The theory is so general in these latitudes that I have thought proper to throw this brief account of it into the form of a paragraph for the report. And I put it under a heading which, I flatter myself, may give it something of its proper dignity as a philosophic speculation:

THE ORB AS CASH

The world does not rest on the back of a tortoise, nor does it now rest on the shoulders of one man. The office of Atlas has long been in commission. The world rests on the shoulders of a syndicate, vulgarly known as "people with money." These

support the entire framework of things, and from them all blessings flow.

Above these, in beautiful gradations of diminishing strength, you have the inferior rich, the well-to-do, the shopkeepers, and, finally, all who can afford to employ a single drudge.

The grand rich are not only a foundation of things: they are as the sun in nature; and they give light and heat to the whole frame.

If they were withdrawn, we should all suddenly freeze to death in the dark.

This is what Radicals, and suchlike, are apt to forget when they begin to "mess the rich about." (I give this important scheme of thought as nearly as possible in the terms of the thinker. It is but prudent, and it is no more than just.)

Now, the rich are constitutionally slow to anger; and, besides, "Dash it, they like the country, you know!" But for this sentiment, what would become of us if they took the huff, and removed Lombard street to South America? "And they could do it, by gad! stone by stone."

From them, and from the stirrings of the sap of desire within them for the blessings of life, emanate all things. Their wants, their cravings, are the measure of the hopes of the race.

They support not only the workingman, but the poet, painter, musician, divine, all of whom may be said, figuratively, to come for orders every morning to the area gate. They maintain the army and navy, whose business it is to provide them with markets by extending the territory.

As for the common run of people, the sordidness of their lives is, no doubt, distressing in the extreme from an elevated point of view. But such as their lot is, it is the utmost of dignity, beauty, comfort, and ease that can possibly be spared to them. If they insist on more, they may imperil the existence of the rich. There is not enough of these things to go round. Besides, they are used to their privations, and even enjoy them, in a way. Whenever the pressure 's too sharp, there 's the charities. "And how are you to keep the charities going, if you please, without the rich?"

All practical men (Seton does not pretend to be of their number) will tell you that without the poor you could never have the rich. It is n't only that all things are relative, you know; it 's a much closer thing than that. You 'd never be able to keep wages down to a working level without it. Now, if ever you fail to do that, good-by to the great firms, and with them good-by to the "whole show," or otherwise, in its ultimate signification, to the cosmic scheme.

End of the Setonian "[illegible]b," etc.

I can hardly exaggerate the difficulty I have had in bringing the young man to this point. The expository character of his confidence is entirely foreign to his nature and his tastes. It is as though one wrung his religion out of him by the arts of cross-examination. He has his hopes and his assurances, as we all have, but he is under no obligation to talk of them in general society. The business of his day has been such as we have seen. It justifies itself on the face of it; and it ought not to stand in need of these deeper considerations to commend it to our sense of the fitness of things.

Herein, as I take it, lies the relevancy of his next observation:

"It 's all stuff to say Sally's shoulders are too much loaded. Every blessed ounce is muscle or bone."

I take the hint, and talk fetlocks for the remainder of the drive.

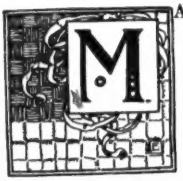
We part at St. James's street. He entreats me to join his friends at the play; I shall find him in the royal box. But I plead a fit of dressing-gown and slippers that gives no hope of immediate recovery.

He is then good enough to insist most firmly on my

attendance at an entertainment of the club of the Originals, to be held some days hence. It is a supper, and the hour of convocation is midnight, to meet the convenience of some ladies of the ballet who are honorary members of the institution. He takes the chair, and he naturally wishes to signalize his tenure of it by a successful rivalry with his predecessor in office. He thinks he can promise that I shall be amused.

I give a conditional acceptance, and take my leave. It has been a wonderfully well-spent day. Let us live while we may. A time-honored caution is ever to the purpose; it is far from certain that we shall be able to play the fool in hell.

XX



AY it please your Excellency:

In my last, hurriedly written, I made a brief reference to our mechanism of classes. I may supplement this by some results of a recent study of the life and works of our merchant princes.

The function of the members of this order is to suck up all the wealth of the nation into their own keeping; and in this view of their purpose they are sometimes said to live in the skies. They are as clouds—absorbed moisture, for distribution in beneficent showers over the areas from which it is drawn. The first part of the process undoubtedly leaves the plains dry. But just as these come to the parching-point, the reservoirs open, down comes the gentle rain, and the plains smile again as at their own fears.

The method of distribution takes the form of the demand for luxuries.

It is the business of the cloud-dwellers to eat as much as they can, drink as much as they can, dance, and gallop, and bedizen themselves generally with things of price. This, in their own and the general estimation, circulates the money which otherwise might have been wasted on too abundant Sunday dinners, and makes them extremely popular.

Thus the merchant princes to whom I refer are forever raining back, in self-indulgence, on their fellow-creatures. Where a common hack, not to say a bicycle, might serve others for locomotion, they store enough horse-flesh to mount a regiment of cavalry. In this way they become the providence of a host

of stablemen, jockeys, and Fleet street betting touts, who otherwise might not know where to lay their heads.

The ramifications of service, sir, are endless, and they are of such complexity of social uses that it would be difficult to make them intelligible to yourself or your honorable council. The accompanying diagram may be of some assistance. The channel A conducts all the capitalized produce of the earth into B, the breeches-pocket of this guardian class. This produce then makes its way back to its sources through C, the demand for the pride of life on the part of the guardians. The difference in volume between what is received and what is given back—represented by the section marked "Swag"—stands for the recompense of the guardians.

The dispute as to the distribution of the swag constitutes our present movement in advanced politics. Our lower orders, not clearly grasping the principle of the arrangement, are often led to believe that there would be more for them to eat, drink, and avoid if there were less for the others. The wiser sort see that the true remedy is for the others to eat more. The latter seldom fail to realize this high conception of duty. Rich man's gout is distressingly common in this class.

The scheme is less simple, perhaps, than your Excellency's island plan of making the whole community both receiver and distributor from the start. But simplicity can never be the note of a highly organized social system like ours.

A conscientious young man of fashion, sir, is literally at it, in the work of distribution, from morning to night. And where a millionaire parent is blessed with progeny of this description, we have the very perfection of the economic scheme of these islands of the parent group. I append a curious theory of the universe which I have been so fortunate as to obtain from one of this condition. It may serve, better than any tables of distance, to make your Excellency feel that you live a long way off.

In the same way, the demand of our superior class for the luxuries of spiritual truth gives a great impetus to the religious life. Any new invention in this line secures instant and respectful attention from persons whose natural craving is for a pick-

me-up. They lay it in, so to speak, in a jiffy. Whatever comes of it in the long run, it is in the meantime a living for the inventors. We are very busy just now with a system of therapeutics in which texts from Scripture take the place of drugs. You are dosed, for instance, with a verse from Matthew or from James instead of the ordinary ingredients of the pharmacopœia. This is an ingenious attempt to restore our faith to its old place as mistress of the sciences. It is not infallible,—what system is?—and it has been known to fail in cases of typhoid and of croup. In one of its applications it is in great favor with the poor. It saves them the cost of doctor's stuff, for they have only to supplement the text with a little salad-oil. The sense of religious rapture over mercies received on the Stock Exchange, or elsewhere, sometimes finds its material expression in offerings of great beauty for the altar from the first-fruits of successful speculation. One of the most symbolical of the Jubilee gifts will enrich our metropolitan cathedral with a costly service of plate from this source.

I have the honor to be, etc.

INCLOSURES

Plan of proposed route.

Scheme of decoration for leading thoroughfares.

Theory of the Orb as Cash (Seton Ridler, Esq.).

Hymn to be sung on Jubilee morning by debenture-holders of Ridler, Ridler & Co., Class A.

BOOK III

XXI

NEVER went to Seton's supper.

On the day fixed for it I am back in my garret in John street once more, and giving an entertainment of my own (a sort of belated housewarming) to Low Covey and Tilda, Mammy and Nance.

I really can't account for it except by way of conjecture. Maybe I need to freshen up my appetite after that lunch at the Snack. Then, again, as the Jubilee is now hard upon us, perhaps I want to write the report from the point of view of John street. The one thing beyond conjecture is that here I am, and that I mean to stay as long as the fun lasts, and then go back to live happy ever after as civilized man.

It is agreed that the only way to see anything of this sort is the old one—live on half a crown a day, and earn it. This introduced me to all the fun of the fair last time, including the starvation bout, which now, in retrospect, is no hardship, but simply a new sauce. So I have found another billet, with the help of my good friends, and, once more, here I am.

It is wonderful how I have dropped into the old life again. I might say, in paraphrase of the returning

Louis XVIII. "Nothing is changed; there is only a covey the more." Their good breeding is perfect. Not a question. I darkly hint at a "barney" in the provinces. It is enough for them, as it is enough for me.

Little Nance, the chum and room-mate of 'Tilda, found my present crib for me, or, at any rate, put me in the way of it. She has lost her livelihood in the sweetmeat trade, and has gone into a rubber factory. The rubber factory wanted a gate-clerk, and I got the job. None may come and none may go without passing me for entry in the books. My finger is on the pulse of the machine.

It is a jolly party. We talk of old days, old friends.

Holy Joe, I hear, is much the same—a shade weaker a shade grumpier, than usual, that 's all. His work as caller-up is falling off a bit, but he has other resources. "Does the Jew's poker Saturdays," says Low Covey, "though it 's a poor lay summer-time." I have grown rusty, I fear, in my friend's idiom, and I am obliged to ask for explanations. They are courteously given. A Jew's poker is a Christian person who attends to Jewish fires on the Sabbath day.

My friends are in great form. The Jubilee spirit is upon them. They are all for mirth and junketings. The streets, busy with the toil of pleasure, excite them. They discuss routes, stations, schemes of decorative art, cost of timber for the stands, its place of origin, its ultimate destination as fire-wood and matches, the future state of the red cloth hanging from the balconies, rumors of fabulous prices paid for places, of

outlandish arrivals in town, "black as your 'at." Above all, they discuss their rulers, and the entire polity under which they live. The Jubilee has thrust this subject on their notice; and it has the same benefit of the advertisement that Providence derives from an occasional earthquake in its manifestations to busy men.

I wish I had one of the outlandish envoys to complete the party. Then I might learn which knew least of the Jubilee—the black man or present company. It would be impossible, I should say, to surpass our ignorance of the whole significance of the pageant. We know that somebody has reigned over us for sixty years, and that is about all. We apprehend the mysterious entity as a realized absolute of all desirable things—wealth, power, irresponsibility, good eating and drinking, and the right to lie abed as late as you like in the morning. We are not hostile to it; we are not loyal to it; our longing to enjoy its supposed privilege of doing "as it damn pleases" makes it almost holy in our eyes. The sheer wonder of its existence, and its attributes, precludes both love and hate. It is not so much a personage as it is the "government." And we think of this as the savage thinks of the white man, or as Caliban of his lord—as a creature of magical power, but very cold, cruel, and unprincipled at heart. We should like to have Prospero's luck at the cost of his failings. But there is no chance.

Power, power, power!—the joy of living according to appetite and whim! Low Covey, who is our

principal spokesman, has endless anecdote on this point. He is particularly deep in that lore of tradition which serves his set for history, philosophy, morals, poetry, and the whole subjective view of life, and still renders them independent of books. His grandfather loafed about outside a public house at the back of St. James's street; and there, down to the time of his retirement to the workhouse, he received the news of the court. Low Covey sat at his grandfather's knee and heard all the fables of the tribe on government and institutions, nature and man. If Low Covey has children, these fables will be transmitted to them, with accretions, as the basis of a working theory of life. They are no less preposterous when they concern the "r'yal famerly" than the fables about the early gods.

The grandfather was a link between the regency and the Victorian age. "'E see the Prince Regent a-goin' to be crowned, 'e did," says Low Covey. "Lord, what fights! This 'ere Jubilee 'll be nothin' to it. Too many slops abaht. Why, there was a bit of a turn-up between the Regent hisself and 'is old woman, Queen Caroline. She wanted to come and be crowned too. He would n't stick that; so he gives his orders, and blessed if they did n't bang the doors in her face."

"T' other way on, this time o' day," says 'Tilda, bridling with the pride of sex. "The Queen 's the master now."

"She had to fight for it, though," says Mammy, "queen as she was. The Prince—Prince—what d' ye call 'im?"

"Concert?" suggests Low Covey.

"That 's it. Well, he was like all the men; he tried it on. Wanted to stay out 's late as he chose, and 'ave 'is latch-key, and sichlike. She soon put a stop to thet."

"How did she do it?"

"Kep' 'im out one time all the blessed night, an' left 'im to cool 'is 'eels in the Green Park."

"Garn!"

"Fack. It was like this: Says she, 'You 've got to come 'ome at 'alf-past 'leven, like other people's 'usbands; an' if you don't, you 'll find the gates o' this 'ere pallis closed.' He takes it as if it was a good joke, and nex' night back he comes at 'alf-past twelve. But the sentry stops him.

"'Let me pass, feller,' says he. 'I 'm the Prince Concert.'

"'I 'm the Queen's guard,' says the sojer, not a bit afride. 'Them 's the orders on the slate.' He nivver did it agyne."

'Tilda (in sheer admiration). Oh, carry me out an' let me die!

Low Covey. They kin do as they like, an' no mistike. Old George IV used to wake up 'ungry in the middle of the night, and ring for anythink he fancied. There it was. Cooks sittin' up all the blessed time to get it ready for 'im, 'ot an' 'ot. If it war n't ready, he give the shove to the 'ole shoot.

Mammy. Ah, and 'ad a beautiful place, too, at Brighton, an' carried on jest the sime there.

Low Covey (not to be taken unawares). Pavilion—

same nime as the music-'all. Used to drive 'isself down. Dropped 'is whip one day. My ol' gran'-father's brother-in-law picked it up. Chucked him a dollar—jest like tuppence to you or me. Wanted for nothin' in this world—prize-fightin', cock-fightin', an' 'ad the chalky gout. 'Oly Moses! what points he could ha' given the Prince o' Wiles! I sometimes fancies I 'ears 'em talkin' together—blessed if I don't!—jest as I might be 'earin' o' you naow."

I listen with strained ear, in the wild hope of an imaginary conversation beside which all the others will be as naught. The hope is fulfilled.

"He would n't ha' thought nothin' o' the Prince o' Wiles," continues Low Covey, toying with his subject, and then suddenly coming to the grip: "'D' ye call that goin' on the batter?' I kin fancy 'im sayin', when the other was braggin' o' one of 'is larks. 'D' ye know what I call it? I call it goin' out with the governiss. Ever bin to the Fives Court?'

"'No, uncle.'

"'Thought not. Ridin' on a fire-injin—that 's abaht your form. I s'pose, now, you niver rid a steeplechase by moonlight in your nightcap and stockin' feet? You would n't do sich a thing. Oh, no!'

"'No, uncle.'

"'Good boy! They 'll tike yer to the S'logical Gardings next half-hollerday; an' don't forgit the buns. Bartholomew Fair 's all gone, I s'pose, and so 's the old watch-'ouse, top of the Haymarkit, I dessay.'

"'Yes, uncle.'

"'All layin' o' foundation-stones now, and mind yer bring yer wife; an' back to town same night for a meetin' o' the R'yal Sersiety.'

"'Yes, uncle.'

"'I s'pose you don't know what sort o' cattle used to run at Tenterden Park races?'

"'No, uncle.'

"'"Yes, uncle," "No, uncle." D' ye know what I call yer? Yah!'"

But the inspiration ceases all too soon, and Low Covey is the bloke again. "Ah, they was 'igh old times!" is his final word. His brief excursion into imaginative literature was precious while it lasted, though far too short. It served to set forth his conviction that an unbridled riot of the senses for the upper classes has its economic uses for their inferiors. The crumbs of license that fall from the gent's table make a debauch for the "pore" cove. Had I to lecture to Low Covey from the platform of a university settlement, with a view to his pleasure rather than his edification, I think I should take "High Old Times of History" for my theme. He once complained bitterly to me that our forefathers, as represented on the lecture platform, never seemed to "enj'y" themselves—"so cold-like." He meant that they were kept so unceasingly engaged on the framework of the British constitution that they had no time for skittles or beer. I should read comforting passages to him from the wicked periods—the Italy of the Renaissance, the Rome of the decline—to show that neither national

misfortunes nor spiritual regeneration need ever spoil the fun of the fair.

"My Gawd! won't them chaps from the collynies 'ave the kick!" he observes, in allusion to their entertainment at the public expense. "The gover'ment 's took a 'otel for the toffs. Eat an' drink as much as yer like, an' never mind the bill. Sime thing for the other chaps, like you an' me; Chelsea Barricks, fare out an' 'ome."

'Tilda. Where 's the collynies?

Low Covey (decisively). Other sahd o' the sea. Reg'lar bunch of 'em. 'Arf as big ag'in as this 'ere country; and this is a pretty big 'un, I kin tell yer, if yer try to walk through.

'Tilda. I see a joskin from the collynies t' other d'y —a sojer he wuz, felt 'at and a feather. White as you or me. I thought they was all black men.

Covey. It 's this w'y. Them as goes out from this country is the color o' Christians at the start. Then they turns black in course o' time. It 's the sun. Briles 'em, like.

'Tilda. And is their kids born black? Oh, I s'y!

Covey (with some uncertainty of touch). Sort o' kauphy color fust go off. You seen that little mehogany-faced chap as does the clog-dance at the Pav.? Well, he 's a collynies.

'Tilda. The Queen's whitey-brown 'osses—do they come from there?

Covey. No; that 's nature.

'Tilda. They s'y somebody 's give 'er a parasole worth four 'undred pound. Oh, golly! 'ow d' ye like me now?

Nance. Gold 'andle, with di'minds and real lace. I see about it in the piper.

'Tilda. I wonder 'ow much she 'd be wuth as she stands, jest in 'er Sunday clo'es. I don't mean 'er furniture and the money she 's got in the box. Thousand pound, I dessay.

Covey. Git out. Why, there 's some duchisses wuth more than that. That 's why they always has so many lobsters an' bobbies abaht. Somebody 'u'd snatch 'er—lay your life—if they let 'er out by 'erself.

'Tilda. Won't it be fine to see the sojers on 'orseback? I hope it 's the reds.

Covey. My fancy is for the chaps from the ships. Goin' to bring their guns with 'em. Shoot four mile. That 's what licks the fore'ners so, when we 're a-takin' their countries. Picks 'em off afore they kin come near. Fore'ners can't make them tools. Ain't got the machinery.

'Tilda. They kin make fancy boots, though—you lay yer life.

Covey (with some disdain). Oh, they 're all right fur them tasty sort o' things, I dessay.

'Tilda. Then what business 'a' we got to go and shoot 'em?

Covey. 'Ow are yer goin' to git your tea and sugar? 'T all comes from there.

'Tilda (evading the point). There don't seem much 'arm in 'em, as I see. Lots on 'em at the Circus. Comes to buy flowers. Takes off their 'ats sometimes. One juggins called me "madmyzel" t' other d'y, an'

made signs that he wanted to 'ave the flower pinned jest over 'is bloomin' 'art.

Nance. A fore'ner spoke to me one d'y. Sech pretty broken English! Like a biby.

'Tilda. Git out, yer blessed little cake. What do you know about fore'ners? If ever I ketch yer messin' abaht wi' any o' them, I 'll sling 'im one in the eye.

Nance (tearfully). I did n't s'y I 'ad nothin' to s'y to 'im. I only passed the remark.

Covey. It depends upon the sort o' fore'ner. Amerikins is all right. Very free with their money. Don't seem able to reckin below sixpence. Bob for fetchin' a cab sometimes. Theirs is a big country, too—bigger than ours; but we make it up in the trimmin's, like. Some o' them 's comin' over. They ain't got no kings or queens. Sort o' chairman elected by a vote o' thanks. Don't want nothin' fetched for 'em when they 're at 'ome; everything in the 'ouse by telegraph. It must be a 'ard country for the pore.

Nance. Then ther 's Germans.

Covey. Yah! Gimme a drink neat.

Nance. An' Chinymen. Ever see that lot?

Covey. Never see nothink else if you 're doin' a job at the docks. They 're fly, and no mistike. Pretends to wear petticoats: got bags on underneath. Well, what with one an' the other on 'em, the coin 'll change 'ands. Reckon we mike our expenses, at any rate.

On the departure of the ladies, his talk becomes more intimate and confidential. He asks for my news during the interval of my supposed absence from the capital, and gives me his. His assumption that I have

been doing something more or less dishonest is not in the least offensive, since he is perfectly willing to accept the same imputation on his own account. He would be best defined, perhaps, as an odd jobber of the criminal class. His photograph, I should say, is not in the national portrait-gallery at Scotland Yard, but it is on its way. He "does a bit" now and then in illegality, when hard pressed by the want of bread or the want of beer. His craving is for movement, variety, color in life. Fairs, race-meetings, pleasurable gatherings of all sorts, are his favorite scenes of activity, wherein the day provides for the day, and the day's work varies from the holding of horses, or the running of messages, to the tripping up of a drunken navvy at large and rendering him destitute of the means of further riot by a swift visitation of his pockets. Brute as he is, he is, as yet, no coward. He has the saving tenderness for weak things of the mere outlaw stage of depravity. He would not hurt a worm, but he would certainly regard the navvy as fair game. He will settle down occasionally, as we have seen, to regular labor; but he is quite orthodox in his view of that state as the primeval curse. He is ever haunted by the ungenerous suspicion that when working for fixed wages he is being "had." He seems a product of generations of inbreeding in nomad idleness. I am not acquainted with the family history, but I strongly suspect that his progenitors were a little overwrought while helping to create our national industries. One would incline to the belief that, after some centuries of profitless discomfort, they suddenly

struck work forever under the Tudor kings, and fell into the habit of passing their Mondays with Mrs. Elinore Rummyng. This hypothesis would account for the fact that their descendant now claims a perpetual endowment of idleness, like the progeny of other founders.

"The fact is, myte," he says, in a burst of confidence, "I was born tired, an' I don't seem ible to settle down to this 'ere ring yer in in the mornin' an' ring yer out at night. The way that gal Nance kin do it is a puffeck caution to me. I bin doin' very well, since I see you, raound the northern cirkit with a show. Might ha' bin doin' well still, but the gaff was blowed by a set o' fools. I was one o' these yere wild men, yer know, jest caught on the coast of Afriky. 'Walk up, walk up!' That was the patter. D' ye foller me? Lor'! I know it by 'art. 'He don't speak no language, gentlemen, known in these parts. His food is carrion. His garmints is put on for decency, but he goes nakid in the savij state. If I was allowed to take 'is clothes off, you 'd see he was tattooed from head to foot with bear-'unts and the signs o' the zodiac. He was a prince in 'is own country; and we 'ad almost to exterminate his devotid followers with the Maxim gun afore we could git him aboard the man-o'-war. He has had to be kep' in a cage ever since. Don't be frightened when you sees him rattlin' his chains. To prevent accidents, the attendint will stand by with a drawn sword. He is partic'larly ferocious at feedin'-time, an' he is jest goin' to 'ave a meal.'

"It was good bizness, and when the show was shut, I washes off the burnt cork, and sits down to my toke and pipe. But one day, an' a Monday too, when the coin was rollin' in, up comes half a dozen long-faced coves in black, with a sort of I-forbid-the-banns look all over 'em, an' holds up their 'ands. 'What 's up now?' says my myte, as was standin' guard over me with the cutlash. 'We represents the Musselbry branch o' the Slav'ry Sersiety,' says a sort of amen-curler, as was at the 'ead on 'em; 'an' we demand the immedjut release of this onhappy bein' under the laws of Britain.' We was crabbed. There was my chains a-clankin'; and if we 'd said they was took off at night, along with the burnt cork, the mugs might ha' wrecked the show. So Bill tips me the wink to pretend not to tumble to their lingo, and, when the turn was over, tells 'em they must settle the matter with the native.

"'Where does the onhappy bein' come from?' asks one on 'em.

"'Coast o' Afriky,' says William.

"'Which coast?'

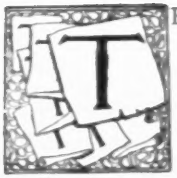
"''Ow should I know? Arst 'im yerself.'

"'Can he speak Arrybic?' says one on 'em, jabberin' something to me; but I only shakes my 'ead.

"'Try 'im in Sueely,' says another. More gibberish. Then they changed the bowlin' ag'in, an' slings a lot more on it, for all the world like small shot. It was gettin' okkard, for the gong was beatin' outside for another turn. 'Look here,' I says, takin' off my chains, and squarin' up to the interpriter; 'what d' ye

mean by trying to prevent a man from earnin' a honest livin'? Cheese it, an' slide.' But they blowed the gaff as soon 's they went outside. The manigement had to put up a stuffed mermaid next mornin', an' I got the shove."

XXI.



HIS new berth is better than the old one. The other was a mere firm. We are going to be a union—the "Rubber Union of Great Britain and the Colonies." Some of the biggest people are in it,—such is the rumor of the factory,—and their names are shortly to be disclosed. As a mere expectation, I assure you, it is advancement in the scale of being, and it makes me proud of my place at the gate. We soothe the bed of pain with surgical sheetings; we keep beauty dry-shod; we clothe the flying wheel with silence and with ease; we are the gentler restraints of machinery. Moreover, we stand between the virtuous man and the rain of heaven for the whole area of the British Isles. At any rate, we hope to do so. Our directorate—as yet but a dark horse—want to buy up all the rubber interests, and to concentrate them in a great trust. When that is done, try, if you can, to get so much as an india-rubber balloon, or an india-rubber nightingale, in the Lowther Arcade, without our special leave.

We own a town within a town. First comes London, and then come we—a sort of imperial city within

its own walls. We were once a suburb, and looked from our battlements upon green fields. But the town has gradually grown up to us and about us, as it does to graveyards, and now we make the atmosphere for a whole postal district, peopled as thickly to the acre as the blackest square on Mr. Booth's maps. For, to tell the truth, as to odors our offense is somewhat rank, and what we may happen to lack in ozone we make up for in the vapor of naphtha. The naphtha begins a quarter of a mile away from my gate, and within that range the hardiest flowers have a desperate struggle for existence. There is not a flea in the factory—I say it with pride. The mephitic air grows thicker as you near the buildings, and within them it is a vapor that leaves no cranny unvisited as it mounts, story by story, to the roof. On the topmost floor we have another and a special infusion of carbon bisulphid, which is given off by processes that involve some danger to life. As the whole combination rises to the sky, it is enough to make the angels hold their noses; and it must cause frequent false alarms there in its persistent suggestion of a leakage in the roof of hell.

I stand all day at the gate, and pass the hundreds in to their daily toil—girls and women, boys and men. The great factory absorbs them, and they move to their appointed places like seamen taking their stations for battle.

Our marvels of applied science begin on the ground floor. Here we cleanse the raw rubber, and dissolve it with naphtha until it becomes a paste from which we make our miracle pie. This is the origin of our

all-pervading smell. But you get used to naphtha as you get used to eau-de-cologne, and I have known what it is to miss it when taking a walk in the green fields. In another part of the establishment we spread the paste with exquisite uniformity over the delicate stuffs that form the basis of the fabric. After the spreading comes the drying. The coated tissues pass over a heated table. And there you are for that part of the miracle. Then it goes to another department. We have already waterproofed our material in the piece; we have now to waterproof it in the joints of the made-up article. So we paint the seams of our garments, pouches, and what not with a solution of naphtha and rubber, and roll and press them so closely and so evenly that no kind of moisture, however penetrating,—not even a tear from pity's eye,—could find its way through. This department, for purposes of sensational effect, is our great scene. Hundreds of girls and women—little Nance among them—stand in the vast room, each with paint-box of solution and brush in hand, and lay on the livelong day. This is one way; but there are others. In one of them we smear with carbon bisulphid, and dry the fabric by hanging it up instead of passing it over the heated plate. To see this you must mount to the uppermost story, where the men in charge lie at full length along the roof-beams to spread the sheets for the drying, like so many sailors stretched along the yards. In regard to their general atmosphere, all these busy little creatures are, as it were, the fauna of a naphtha world. It is, in this limited sense, a spirit-world, a

world of organisms that live and move and have their being in a medium which is not atmospheric air, and in a temperature which is that of the vestibule of a Turkish bath It is a great thing to have these wonders revealed to you without the intervention of the microscope

As porter I have no little trouble with the girls. They are as irregular in attendance as ladies of the ballet in the season of pantomime. I am indebted for this comparison to a friend who keeps the door at Drury Lane. At one moment, he says, you have your entire court of fairyland up to the strength; the next, a whole battalion of twinkling feet may be decimated by a dinner-party at Richmond, and a dozen telegrams announcing sudden illness indicate the neighborhood of the Star and Garter as the seat of the outbreak. The comparison does not hold good in every point. Our girls seldom make default in that way.

There is something in the thought that when our great combine is organized I shall be porter of the largest establishment of its kind in the world. For the moment the scheme is suspended. There is no business of the larger sort to be done at this time of festival, but the factory is as hard at it as ever. The demand for waterproofs has been unprecedentedly large. Who would be balked of a Jubilee procession by the mischance of a rainy day?

XXIII

REAT 'Tilda! She is such a change from the daughters of my parish. She might be scheduled as big, strong, fierce, cheeky, defiant, untamable, godless, a mighty woman of her hands. The others, bless them, are all so very much "just so." They will one day bring their males up to their own high level; but meanwhile perfection palls. It is odiously ungrateful, but there seems no "bite" in their pretty ways, their soft voices, their allusive turns of phrase. One gets all of a twitter with it, and feels clean outclassed in a set of proprieties in which there is no chance of taking the lead. Man can never be but as the shadow to the substance in this line, and a shadow with a sense of self-respect is piteous beyond compare. It is no better when they condescend to one's own level in the coarser arts. Their slang is baby-talk. Their calculated impertinence is not the real article. Their double-breasted waistcoats and sporting ties are but a weariness of the flesh for them, and of the spirit for the beholder. Their gaiters lack conviction. In their attempts to talk Tattersall's or the Stock Exchange they cannot be said to play the game.

But this hen of the walk of our slum is really herself in all her effects. Her bad English is straight from the turbid well. Her manner is no garment; it is her very skin. From her cradle,—if she ever had one,—she has faced the world, and fought her way in it to such poor place as she holds. Who can jaw a copper like 'Tilda, or carney a Covent Garden salesman out of a bargain, or take the size out of a chaffing swell? She is not in the least aware of her perfections in this kind. They are but parts of her day's work. To have failed in them would have been simply to go under in the fierce mêlée, whereof the prizes are a bite, a sup, and a lodging most days of the year, and a feather for bank-holidays.

I have just this hold on her interest—mystery. She has deigned to express her belief that there is a "blessid" something about me which she can't make out. Once, to my inexpressible joy, she went so far as to affirm her conviction that I was a "fake." It might have been offensive in ordinary circumstances, but it showed that I was in her thoughts. She has questioned me as to what I am, where I came from, how I came to be here. Only those who are aware of our well-bred indifference, in John street, to matters that "ain't no business" of ours can rightly estimate the compliment. She is prepared, I think, to accept confidences which show that I was once a shop-walker, and fell through "lap" (for which read "liquor") or through love. With the spirit of divination, which is the glory of her sex, she has discovered that in better days I wore cuffs to my shirt. The appellation of

"the toff," which she has given me, is hardly in keeping with my present style, and for this reason I am sometimes inclined to think it means more than meets the eye.

It would be easy to argue falsely from appearances, and to conclude, from her frequent purchases of wedding-rings, that her sole concern is the felicity of the married state. It is nothing of the sort. She puts her savings into these articles, that is all; and she carries them, for safe-keeping, strung on a ribbon round her neck, and hidden by her dress. Being unmarried, she cannot, of course, wear them on her finger. As worn by the matrons of her class, they erroneously suggest polyandry carried to the excess of a master passion. They are simply stored wealth. The wedding-ring marks the nearest approach to par value in purchase. But little of its cost is wasted on manufacture; it is a band of precious metal sold by weight. It will pawn for well-nigh that weight in gold. Nothing is easier in emergencies than to detach a ring from the chaplet and turn it into something like its original equivalent in coin of the realm. This is 'Tilda's effective substitute for the Post-Office Savings Bank, an institution to which she objects, for two reasons. One of them is that her scholarship does not enable her to master the forms of entry; the other that she dislikes the "'aughty and overbearin' ways" —so she is pleased to express it—of the "young cats" at the counter through whose hands they have to pass.

She keeps company with Covey; but it is well under-

stood in John street that keeping company pledges the parties to nothing on either side. It is a mere trial for the larger venture of an engagement. It is done according to the rules of our local code of etiquette. To this I can testify. By a happy chance during my late sojourn, I espied them, one Saturday afternoon, from the shade of a furze-bush at Hampstead, observing but not observed. 'Tilda was in her second best. Covey was smartened up. They did not walk together; the swain kept some few yards in advance. It is our accepted order of procession for occasions of this sort. It preserves the sense of independence, and tends to confirm the promenade in its character of a non-committal stroll. To walk side by side might imply a settled thing. The man went first, as though in accordance with some surviving idea of leadership in the chase that still admitted the possibility of a sudden lion in the Vale of Health. The woman seemed to watch the slender baggage of the tribe. They were still within speaking distance, and the scout delivered epigrams over his shoulder, while the rear "chi-hiked" to call his attention to objects of interest within her ken. But they spoke rarely. Their sense of companionship was chiefly visual; and when they felt the need of closer communication, it found its satisfaction in horse-play. The damsel, who, I cannot deny, gave Covey some encouragement, now and again stole up to him on tiptoe, struck him coquettishly with her fist, and then ran away. He gave chase, overtook her, and thumped her with judgment and discernment, in his turn, to the accompaniment of

her shrieks of defiance and alarm. Theseus and his Hippolyta, I imagine, courted in this fashion. I am full sure they found no sufficient relief to their feelings in pulling the petals of a rose. I followed the elementary love chase with unspeakable interest, until I saw it end at the "Spaniards," over a tankard of ale.

My appellation of "the toff," I believe, is, in one point of view, 'Tilda's tribute to my aristocracy of intellect. I have lately essayed, though with diffidence, to do something for the improvement of her mind. By infinite cunning and address, I have obtained permission to walk out with her—always without prejudice to Covey's claims. As it rests with me to choose the venue, I artfully select the public collections and other elevating institutions of that kind. We have visited the National Gallery—for the first time in 'Tilda's life. She proposed that we should take nuts with us, but I discouraged it; though I afterward caught her nibbling crumbs of cake from her pocket, as though to fill a void of interest in the school of Urbino. She was greatly impressed by the beauty of the staircase, and by the decoration of the rooms, and her first exclamation was: "Oh, mother! don't the paint make you feel good!" I took this to be her untutored tribute to the way in which the rich glowing colors, in their entirety, were harmonized by the suffusion of soft light from the roof. Nor was she insensible to the beauties of the collection in detail. Her test in art of all kinds, I find, is literal truth—verisimilitude of imitation. She lingered long before a fruit-and-flower piece, and observed

with satisfaction that there were no grapes of that quality in the street shade, and that to get them you must go to the West End shops. She judged the most spiritual compositions from this point of view, and by the simple rule of fixing her attention on the one accessory she did understand, and asking herself, or me, if it looked like nature. Where the picture failed in this, martyrs aspired to heaven and angels sang them into glory in vain. For this reason she was about to reject the entire school of Florence as unworthy of attention until she caught sight of a shepherd, in Botticelli's "Nativity," whose nose is twisted on one side in the ardor of an angel's congratulatory embrace. "It 's the gristly part as gives," she remarked simply; "I 've seem 'em go jest like that." She praised this part of the composition, but she objected to the parting of the ass's mane as "too O. K. for a moke." Having caught this critical chill, I am afraid she missed the effect of the rapture of joy which pervades the entire work. The school of Venice was scarcely more fortunate in her esteem, owing to an oversight of the painter of the "Family of Darius," which led her to condemn one of his accessory figures as "not much of a monkey." In contemplating the artless simplicity of pose, or the oddity of costume, in some of the earlier works, she with difficulty resisted a temptation to open mockery. She pronounced the "Ulysses" of Pinturicchio a "cure"; and at sight of the "Jan Arnolfini" and his lady, she frankly gave way, taunted the male figure on the shape of his hat, and indulged in a fit of laughter which drew upon us a

severe glance of the attendant. A neighboring "Venus and Adonis" seemed to excite her indignation, and she turned from it muttering that the painter "ought to have had a month." My look of disappointment seemed to strike her with remorse for a certain want of gratitude on her part. She sought to right herself, therefore, by remarks of an appreciative nature, by which I was infinitely touched. If they were not very much to the purpose, they were certainly well meant. Thus, in Bellini's "St. Jerome in his Study," she commended the extremely lifelike drawing of the shoes; and her entirely favorable verdict on the immortal "Virgin and Child" of the Florentine master was: "He do seem to enjoy hisself, the kid!"—in unmistakable reference to the energy of the infant in the act of nutrition.

But she atoned for all these mistakes by her behavior before the great "Pieta" of Francia. She paid an unforced tribute of awe to its majesty of sorrow by standing perfectly still before it for five minutes, without either eating a sweetmeat or speaking a word.

She lingered for some time, too, before the "Annunciation" of Filippo Lippi, but it was for another reason. The angel, she said, was "the very picture of Nance." She seemed conscience-struck by the reflection that she was enjoying herself when she ought to have been taking that "pore little dear" out for a drive on a bus, to cure her of a persistent sick-headache with which she had been troubled of late. This thought seemed to haunt and worry her—very much to her honor, it seemed to me—until I set her mind at

rest by promising to take them both to Hampstead on the following Sunday.

I was less fortunate in contributing to either her pleasure or her edification by a visit to a Monday popular concert. In treating her, at some personal sacrifice, to the shilling seats, I acted on the accepted principle that the people have only to hear good music to love it. She listened to several masterpieces, but without the expected result. In the Beethoven "Quartet No. 5," for instance, I could perceive that she made most determined efforts to "catch the tune," at first by swaying her head to and fro, and then, as she seemed to feel the prize in her grasp, by a slight, yet distinctly audible, movement of the feet. These, however, presently ceased, and their silence was eloquent of her disappointment. Some fragment of what she sought seemed to come to her for a moment in the last variation. But with the concluding bars it eluded her once more, and the magnificent composition was scarcely finished when she rose angrily from her seat, and with the expression, "Let 's chuck it; they must think us mugs," hastily left the building. She was crimson, both with wrath and with shame, when we gained the street, and I thought I had never seen her more charming; but I feigned to be unaware of her distress. Her repentance—manifestly for her want of breeding, though not a word on the subject was said on either side—was most touching. She offered, with downcast eyes, to treat me to the neighboring music-hall at her own expense, no doubt as a sort of indemnity for my cash out of pocket by Beethoven's

failure to please. I found an excuse for declining, and we walked home together in great amity. On our way through the Circus, she showed me her place of business on the steps of the fountain, and asked me to call at any time I might happen to pass. Altogether, it was a great step gained.

We were entirely successful with a series of half-hours with the best authors, which I organized for her benefit at home. Warned by experience, I gave up my first thought of beginning with a selection from Browning's "Paracelsus," and I led her straight into the rose-garden of the "Arabian Nights." She was particularly anxious at the outset to have her doubts as to the author's good faith cleared up. She could stand a lie, she was pleased to say, as well as anybody; but she added, somewhat illogically, that she did n't like "the feller as told it" to pretend it was the truth. I assured her that she was quite warranted in saying that she did n't believe "a blessed word of it," and, with this, she settled down to the enjoyment of that exquisite book. Her remarks showed much natural penetration. They sometimes threw a light on the present condition of Asia Minor,—not to say on the whole Eastern question,—as when she ventured the opinion that the people did n't "seem to do much work out there." A scene of cruelty and ferocity drew from her the observation that "they don't call 'em Turks for nothin'," in which, however, it was impossible to suspect her of plagiarism. Oddly enough, the scenes of luxury and splendor seemed sometimes to have a moral effect on her. For this reason, the fol-

lowing passage in the story of "Alee, the Son of Bekkar," will ever dwell in my memory:

> And while they were amusing themselves with the sight of these extraordinary objects, lo, ten female slaves approached with a graceful and conceited gait, resembling moons, dazzling the sight, and confounding the imagination. They stood in ranks, looking like the black-eyed damsels of paradise; and after them came ten other female slaves, with lutes in their hands, and other instruments of diversion and mirth; and they saluted the two guests, and played upon the lutes, and sang verses; and every one of them was a temptation to the servants of God.

At its conclusion, Tilda rose, and, placing her hand in mine, said she supposed there was something wrong with her, but she would try to be a better girl.

XXIV

OHN STREET has struck work for the Jubilee. It is a novelty in the circumstances, even for such of us as never work, an altogether delightful sensation for the others. For the moment, the economic framework of things is dissolved, and there is a suggestion of new heavens and a new earth, by the latest, the day after to-morrow. This sense of plodding toil as a page of personal history turned, and turned forever, is rare, even as an illusion, for most of our inmates. It is the only comfort of some death-beds. A fortnight's rest in the infirmary, while waiting for the uncertainties of the next world, is by no means a thing to be despised. A humble friend in John street, who has passed through the horrors of shipwreck, tells me that the week's idleness on the reef lent positive attractions even to that trying scene. It was pleasant to sit in one of the deck-cabins, share the tobacco and the biscuit, and make sure of a good "mike" on this side of a life to come which theology has robbed of its idea of rest.

We cannot quite believe that we shall ever return to the collar in the old way. We don't know what is

coming, and we don't want to know. We vaguely aspire to perpetual loafing, varied by occasional revel. Change is hope; the instinct of conservation belongs to a happier state.

We go into committee of ways and means. Money, no doubt, will shortly be abolished, but meanwhile it is undoubtedly tight. We sell and swap and pawn to raise the wherewithal for a week's inaction. We are ready to believe that all the future is our own when we see but two days ahead.

It is the newspapers that work us up so. We feel the eyes of the whole world upon us. Bonaparte's soldiers had that pleasing assurance in depth of consciousness when under the observation of the forty centuries. We have it in breadth, as from China to Peru.

The papers give us a new shock of delight with every issue. This morning it is the list of Jubilee honors. The Sinclairs and Applebys are down; and there is Sir Marmaduke Ridler, Bart., if you please, with a C. B.—no doubt, for services to the human race.

But we have small time for the papers to-day. It is the Tuesday of our hopes. Our party is afoot with the dawn—Nance and 'Tilda, Covey and my humble self. We are provisioned as for travel in the desert, and I carry the gourd. Our first proceeding is to tramp the route on our side of the river in search of a place. 'Tilda stalks ahead, like Artemis moving through high grass after a slain doe. Distance is no object. It is near three miles of historic memories. It would be six if we might cross the bridges. We

range from Constitution Hill, by Piccadilly, St. James's street,—where I find my slouch hat useful from time to time,—the old palace, Pall Mall, the square, the Temple, and so on. It seems to carry one back to the great celebrations of the past, each, in its turn, a day of like promise for poor devils, with no to-morrow. My friends are untroubled by that consideration, for their reading does not allow them to take much account of dead hopes. But, for certain, their fathers before them were buoyed up in the same foolish way when William of Orange went forth in state to start the new time, when Elizabeth rode to St. Paul's for the Armada.

Covey gives the moral: "If yer come to think of it, it 's only a case of 'Change of proprietorship; all liquors of the fust quality' writ up outside a pub. Of course, the new landlord takes over the old stuff."

Each of my companions, naturally, finds full provision for the feast of the eye. 'Tilda and Nance are fascinated by the beauty of the hangings, the rainbow range of the festoons and of the toilets. Covey's most stimulating impression on the sense of color is in the blue of the police. He says he should n't have thought that there were so many "slops" in the world, and he seems to yield for a moment to the depressing conviction that we are too much governed. It would be quite a mistake to think that those of our sort in the crowd—I do not speak specially of our party—take a disinterested delight in the enjoyment of their fellow-creatures in the best seats. They do nothing of the sort. They envy the cleverness of these persons, but

hate their good fortune. It is the jealousy of the Turkey carpet on the part of those whose foothold is the dust. We "guy" our betters in slangy undertones, and, in short, make three miles of rude remarks. I, too, see that there are distinctly two views of life from St. James's street. There is the view from the bow-window, and there is the view from the curb. Persons I had hitherto thought blameless look perfect plutocrats, not to say bloodsuckers, as they now affront my poverty from their numbered seats.

This, I think, is the common feeling of the more "beggarly crew." They would cheer the happy few, if anybody led off; and, in a less favorable conjunction of circumstances, they would, with equal readiness, tear them to pieces. They have the instincts of the house-dog toward domestic game. The kitchen cat is safe as long as it walks with no provocation, and, above all, with no show of fear. If it broke into a run, he would be after it in a moment with very dire intent.

'Tilda longs for a peep at St. Paul's, but the police forbid. We therefore miss the view of that heart of London, which, with more or less energy, has pumped the blood through our ever-growing body politic since the time of Christ. Covey's scheme was to take his station at a point whence he could enjoy a view of the bank, and chew the cud of certain statistical fancies, sweet and bitter, culled from a "Threepenny Guide." This work, in its chapter on the bank, excites him with a tabulation of eighty millions of notes, stored in thirteen thousand boxes, and of a whole cellar full of bars of gold. "An' nothin' between us an' them but a

bloomin' file o' sojers an' a word o' command. Lord! what foolish things there is in life!"

On our way back, we are arrested by a shout which seems to aspire to a particular window in Fleet street. We look up. The survivors of the Balaklava charge are being entertained, as per advertisement. After years of cold obstruction, they get their apotheosis of a cheer. As far as may be judged at this distance, they are of those old men who, according to a satirical slave, have gray beards, and whose eyes (once so fierce in battle) purge amber and plum-tree gum. There they sit in full view of the ravished populace; and right in the midst of them, to our infinite wonder, sits Holy Joe! He too, then, was in that famous fight. How like him never to have said a word about it! 'Tilda waves her kerchief, Nance kisses her hand, Low Covey "chi-hikes" with a cry, which is still itself, and no other, amid all this Babel of sounds. It arrests the old man's attention, and he salutes us with a palsied nod. Then the stream carries us on. We stop at last, on a principle which led a wit of Covey's circle to indicate the way to his residence in the terms: "Walk along the Goswell road until you drop, and then ring the bell." When Nance can fare no farther, 'Tilda orders us to come to a stand.

There is really not much to wait for. We have seen the Jubilee in seeing its line of march. The true show is in these myriads of the happy few, every one of them lord of a slice of the world, or of its equivalent. Mine and forest and prairie are theirs. Ships, telegraphs, commodities, seem to radiate from them to all the

points. The great, opulent, all-compelling middle class that holds the keys to bind and loose for this life keeps its revel to-day. It has come as a king to show itself to its faithful commons on the curbstone. We look up and own a master, as it looks down with God knows what in its mind. It is something, I think, not unpleasant, to judge by the indulgent smile.

We play up to our star performers. All our talk is of the cost of the pageant as evidence of the wealth of the land. The wider the rents in our gabardines, the more freely do our patriotic bosoms swell beneath. 'Tilda has heard that one of the decorated houses in Piccadilly is the property of a "lidy" whose fortune, as per "Threepenny Guide," would weigh, in sovereigns, over thirteen tons. Our watery mouths water again as we reckon that the gold pieces, ranged in a row, would reach four-and-twenty miles. But what is that to the cost of "this 'ere little flourish" as a whole? "Fifty million, if it cost a penny," says Low Covey, with the doctrinal certitude of a teacher who is just one lesson ahead of the taught. "Put that lot en' to en', an' it would make a thin gold line of pavement all the way from 'ere to Sutherlan'shire in Scotland—six hundred and ninety mile. Blimey! You could never git through it in twenty lifetimes, if you give a quid for every pot o' beer. Lay 'em one atop o' the other, an' they 'd make a sort o' monyment seven hundred times as 'igh as St. Paul's. O Canaan, 'appy land!"

I meditate the uses of this pile as a pedestal for a golden calf, visible to all at the hour of morning prayer.

"I should like to 'ave the pilin' on 'em," says Covey, from where he squats on the curb. He seems to leap in his form at the thought of it as a possible job for the unemployed, under the benefit of the precept, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox."

The bystanders rise to the theme.

"Why, this night's fireworks alone, sir, is to be wuth eighty times the Queen's weight in gold. I see it in the piper—wish I may die!"

Mighty, mighty, mighty are some of the outlanders who are with us to-day. The "Australian Jay Gould" once made ten thousand per cent. by a timely supply of food in a famine. When "Diamond Jem of Denver" takes a walk in his best clothes, he carries jewelry to the tune of a hundred and twenty thousand pounds!

Hush!—the procession. The warning trump and drum are superfluous to me. I saw it coming full sixty seconds ago by a light, as of battle, in 'Tilda's eye.

It is heralded to the ear by rising and falling waves of shouting, to the eye by heliographic signals from helm and breastplate. See! Kettledrums and trumpets of the Royal Horse Guards, and behind them a famous general on his battle-horse. His memories run back to a day at the Sikunderabagh, when two thousand mutineers lay in a heap "as high as my head"—"a heaving, surging mass of dead and dying, inextricably entangled"—to mend a rent in our wall of empire. 'Tilda seems to regard him as a second Scipio, the height of Rome.

Now for the colonies, sampled by their premiers and

by their military detachments—hussars and dragoons, lancers and mounted rifles, all, as Low Covey puts it, "as white as you or me." Way for the yellow men!—Chinee and other. Way for the brown!—Sikh and Singalese. Way for the black!—giants from the Gold Coast and from the West Indies. Way for the North Borneo boys!—who have traveled ten thousand miles to join us, and whose mothers were courted with presents of human heads. What a circus is ours!

And hard on the heels of these come endless squadrons and batteries of the conquering race, splendid with trappings, awesome with the sleek and silent guns. 'Tilda stares at these weapons with all the curiosity of first acquaintance, and remarks that they look as though butter would n't melt in their mouths. There is Rayner, at the head of his squadron. He cannot abase his glance to the humble individual in slouched felt and threadbare wrap-rascal, who peers over Nance's shoulder, the most uncompromising "warmint" in the gang.

Of one other I am fortunately unobserved. Right opposite my station, in permanent session, in the most gorgeous of all possible stands, sits Sir Marmaduke Ridler, Bart., C. B., M. P., in all the glory of the best tailoring in town. He and Lady Ridler and their distinguished son entertain a large party on the best floor of the house. He has taken that floor in the Irish sense, as in the English. In sheer magnificence his manner is not to be surpassed. The figure fascinates the beholder by its air of perfect self-confidence and self-satisfaction, of perfect adequacy to all the

purposes of the spectacle. What came ye out for to see? Sir Marmaduke Ridler, Bart., and as aforesaid. The rest are but his foils or his satellites. It is his triumph. He cuts in before the climax, and renders it superfluous. The ambassadors attend him. To the seeing eye, the endless carriages, a whole court on wheels, the royal princesses, the royal princes from all the ends of the earth, do but swell his state. Nay, the very eight cream horses, with their burden (though we forget it in a momentary hush of awe, as with the sense of some real presence), are but adjuncts of his style, since, with their help, he plays his conquering part.

It has come; it has gone. In half an hour more they will be singing hosannas at the cathedral. The brain reels with it still. The message which bears the news of its progress to three hundred and fifty millions, with one touch of an electric button, makes no mention of Sir Marmaduke. But his dominant personality is still implicit in that royal and imperial salutation to a fifth of the population of the globe. The native runners, who are even now tearing along with it from tropical and antipodean receiving offices to every hole and corner of the wondrous system, really carry the glad tidings that Sir Marmaduke kisses his hand to the human race.

XXV

HOME, to refresh ourselves, and to wait for night and the illuminations. Low Covey proposes a nap, and a call sharp at eight, for the resumption of the struggle. We all want rest, Nance especially. The poor child is in the state known among us as "fit to drop." So 'Tilda peremptorily puts her to bed, promising her the illuminations for another night, and a full account of this night's wonders on our return.

The three of us set forth at dusk to see Bagdad by night, the Bagdad with which 'Tilda has already made some acquaintance in the "Arabian Nights." There is a strange awe and wonder in the girl's eyes, as the glories of the main thoroughfares recall her studies in that famous work of fiction. It is no momentary change. For some time past, I think, 'Tilda has been trying "to be good"—to put off her old unregenerate self, and to rise to higher things in behavior. Her language and deportment are most exemplary.

We take Piccadilly twice over, up one side, down the other. Then it is "Lead, kindly light," as far as the bank. Earth is changed. We are of a new race, the children of fire, for whom dullness forms no part of the

punishment of original sin. They enter their dwellings by porticos of radiance. They drape them, even for the public scene, with gorgeous stuffs. Sheer beauty is the first law of these resplendent ones. Their goodness is but a consequence of their horror of every kind of grime. The world has found the secret at last, for the whole world is in it. The papers have told us that when the clock at Greenwich strikes half-past ten, this night, there will be a girdle of flame all round the island, from the bonfires on the hilltops, and from the rockets that hiss their challenge to the stars. Nay, the very empire will be outlined in light, wherever else the sun sets on it at this moment of time. Ormazd has come to his own, and, in spite of the sages, hard it is to believe that Ahriman shall ever spoil sport again. Surely the very planet glows with unwonted intensity in its passage through space, and its perturbations occasion effects of the same kind in the moral order in astonished Mars. Such, at least, is my impression, and I would that I could submit it for verification to Holy Joe. But the astronomer-soldier, as I have just seen, is still at his window in Fleet street, among his fellows of the glorious remnant, bowing, with the perpetual motion of a mandarin toy, in response to the perpetual roar of recognition from below.

That mighty crowd, ever changing and ever the same! The tramp of it on the graveled roadway reminds Covey of nothing more awful than the rhythm of the sand-dance at the music-hall. To me it is as some vast migration of the race—Asia marching on

Europe for a change of lodgings, and, with lagging footfall, ruffling the desert dust. It is like the gunpowder of the definition—in the grain smutty and contemptible, in the mass very terrible indeed. One trembles to think of what might happen if it were suddenly fired with a shock of rage. There is no danger of that just now. It sings hymns to the light,—the Zend-Avesta, as it were, adapted to the devotional scheme of the penny gaffs,—and the weariness of the toil of pleasure inclines it to peace. It is no joke to have to do heaven in four hours. The light shines on many a mile of haggard face and fretful baby, but on never a breach of order or a lapse in the ecstasy of the scene.

If the day was Sir Marmaduke's, the night is ours. The day was for the empire-makers, and such was the glory of their pomp that there seemed no time to look at anything else. We were "all there,"—as Covey might phrase it,—but we could not take stock of ourselves. It was the parade of the contractors for the great job of race extension in all the continents and in all the seas. To-night is the bean-feast of the "hands," of the myriads in collar, as of the other myriads who wait for a billet, or for whom a billet waits in vain.

All our sections are on the colossal scale. There is something at once appalling and uplifting in the thought that perhaps thirty thousand thieves are at work in the crowd, counting those who have come over specially for the harvest from the Continent or from the United States. We recognize some of our own cellarmen from John street here and there. But we

"don't take no notice," bearing in mind Low Covey's golden rule.

It is early morning when we reach John street again, wearied as to death. In our innocence, we have come home to sleep. Vain thought! John street is a pandemonium of swinish revelry. It is the revelry of the jolly beggars, with no item of that copious bill of fare for the senses left out. Caste distinctions are abolished—an unheard-of thing. The wilder sort rule, and they have evidently voted the Saturnalia in permanent session. The milder are too demoralized by the distracting influences of the hour for effective resistance. They, too, vaguely hope the new time. The drink is not so much a flowing Thames as a rising Nile that seems to flood the whole land. The Cock and Hen Club is in full song; the baby-farm is in full cry; the very live stock in the yard yell or scream their sense of the rush of events. '48 's room, open for once to all comers, is gorged with anarchists listening to an address from Mr. Azrael, the Solomon Eagle of our wrath to come. His eyes are ablaze, and with no stimulant from the outside stronger than lemonade. The rest is all inward fire of hate.

That gruesome address!—the more gruesome in its effect for the botchy English. There is everything in it one does not want to hear. Azrael has seen the procession, and, of course, seen it in his own way. For him it is but a revel of the drones at the expense of the drudges. He contrasts its splendors with the squalor of the ministrant industries. He rings the changes on both with the facility of a practised player.

Where we have seen only the ermine or other decorative patches of fur, he sees only the fur-pullers—women clothed in sacking, and working, eating, and sleeping "in an atmosphere thick with impalpable hairs" and tainted with the stench of skins. Helm and breastplate are, for him, but the mirrors wherein, as in the crystal ball, he beholds darkly the horrors of the chemical industries to which they owe their sheen. The smart bridle-chains of the cavalry seem to lead him, link by link of associated ideas, to the wretched girl-thralls of Cradley, dancing on a pair of bellows all day to forge these emblems of bondage, at wages which, by their insignificance, are almost necessarily wages of sin. Through the paint of the carriages, as through a transparency, he sees, and makes us see, other wretched girls drawing the stoves in the white-lead works, their faces veiled—as though they were of some dismal harem of greed—to keep the poison from their blue-lined gums. The very broadcloth of our men of worship, to his microscopic eye, seems peopled with the ghosts of the deadly microbe of anthrax, the wool-comber's disease. Everywhere he shows us a hundred men or women spoiled and flung away that one may be made.

"Behold your lot to-day," he says. "The same thing arrive to-morrow to all the captive peoples at the tail of your car. You turn them into the wealth-producing slaves. But what do they get out of it?"

"Religion, you fool," cries a hoarse voice from the body of the meeting—Holy Joe, the unexpected again, out of his beat for a moment on his way up to bed!

Azrael's mocking laugh is now echoed all round.

"The fine thing! My compliments. But no matter! what do *you* get out of it, old man?"

Poor Joe hangs his head for a moment, as though the blow had struck home. But he has not ridden in the charge for nothing, and he faces his Russian again.

"I had the salute of the commander-in-chief this blessed day."

"The sweater touch his hat to the sweated. Ha, ha! To him the peerage, to you the knocks."

"Whose head-piece does the plannin'?"

"Whose laife is gaged on the plan? Say me that. Why shall he have the cocked hat? No, no, my friend; the tame elephant get no more out of it than the wild elephant he bring into the kraal. The doom is for all. Wherever you go, you carry the blight of your system in your haversack for both sides. How can you help it? Your system make the paupers, as a button-machine make the buttons. Failure is out of the question. You devour whole continents, yet half of you have never enough to eat. That empty belly on which the sun never sets—that make me gay. Australia already has a social question. You cannot make the wealth half so quick as your masters sweep it into their pockets. You are going to gobble up Africa in a wink of the eye. You settled in the Johannesburg only the other day. There is already hundreds in Johannesburg who cannot get the bread. It is the same everywhere—in my country as in yours, in France as in Germany, and in free America. There are no nationalities; there is only one system economic, and that

always grind out the same thing. More land! More land! You have land enough already to feed the human race. But where is it? All in the strong boxes of the Park Lane. Your true little Englander is not the one who refuse to join in the grab, but the one who get so little out of it for himself. If your *bon Dieu* give you all the planets for free pasture, still you manage to leave half the people with nothing to eat. Civilization invent the hunger and the Maxim gun. The savage never know how to starve in the midst of plenty, till you show him the way.

"And that is what the proletarian go out to throw up their caps for. Shall I tell you what I call them when they do that? I call them—ah, pardon—the word? the word?"

Low Covey, with a sincere desire to make himself useful, suggests "mugs."

"No, monsieur," returns Azrael, with severity, disconcerted by the laugh.

"Jugginses?" cries Low Covey, still as one bearing a hand.

There is no answer—as they say in the House.

But the orator has it at last: "I call them the dupes."

"He dunno the langwidge, yer see," explains Low Covey; "but I bet yer a dollar he 's tryin' for 'jossers,' all the same."

Oh, the dismal, dismal speech of this spoiler of a nation's sport!—dismalest at the close, where he thunders against the princely dinner to the slums, which is to exhibit the virtuous poor by the hundred

thousand struggling, amid all this riot of opulence, for a cut of beef and a ha'penny orange as their highest attainable good in life. Bitter is his derision of the tactical mistake of bringing all these incarnate reproaches to the system out of the hiding of their hovels and fever dens—wherein their obscurity saves the wear and tear of the public conscience—to have them reviewed, like whole armies of misery, in the light of the Jubilee day.

Never before have I heard such a speech. Never have I dreamed that such a speech could be made, even as an exercise in paradox. "Sort o' gives yer a nasty taste in the mouth," says Low Covey, as he leaves the meeting, and accepts an invitation to pot-luck for the remainder of the revel from one of the bacchanalian floors.

The morning and the evening make the first day. There is a second on Wednesday, when we tramp the streets again, and take our station betimes for the gala performance at the opera. Our modest means will hardly run to anything higher than the curbstone, at a time when people are paying six guineas for a stall and two hundred for a box. I am unable, therefore, to report to his Excellency at first hand on this part of the festival. But I have my scissors, and I have a pot of paste, and these serve to provide me with much spoil of the following kind:

> The stalls and boxes contained a superlatively brilliant assembly. The duchesses were present in full force, and almost all the dresses were white; one or two were black, but pale tones of green or blue or yellow were numerous. The display

of jewels was wonderful. Scattered among the pretty women were men in uniform, in court dress, in levee dress, Oriental magnates in scarlet-velvet coats, richly embroidered in bullion gold, and wearing white-and-silver turbans glittering with precious stones; and altogether, with the swaying veils of roses and the perfume of exotics, the delicious music and the universal sentiment of rejoicing, the scene was one to be ever remembered.

Then, after more illuminations, back again to the house, its riot more devilish than ever now, as the madness of drink is intensified by the fear of approaching famine. The remainder copper has become too rare to warrant us in wasting it on bread.

XXVI

HURSDAY is a tremendous day. It is for the dinner to the poor. On that day, of all the days in the year, nobody in all ineffectual London is to go hungry to bed. Such is the high ambition of our founders of the feast.

'Tilda scorns to bid for a place at the board, being under the impression that the less eaten by those who can do without it, the more will there be left for those who cannot. This only shows that her political economy is scarcely in even the rudimentary stage. But there is a call for helpers in our quarter, and she has volunteered for that service. The dinner is to be held in a huge hall which serves as a receiving-house for goods on ordinary occasions, and which bears some of the odors of the stable. The tables stretch from end to end of it, in long perspectives of trestle and deal board. We are going to fill them all.

'Tilda has not only offered herself as cup-bearer, she has taken charge of the entire floral decoration of the table at which she is to serve. It is the children's table. The seniors of both sexes will occupy the rest of the hall. We expect a few cripples, young and

old. It will be a fair muster of the misery of the quarter.

Her charge necessitates an early visit to Covent Garden market; and Covey and I have the privilege of being in attendance. Covey has an air of standing by to see fair play; but his services in that line are not required. It is a lesson in tradecraft and self-possession to see how the girl holds her own with the dealers, with what swift judgment she chooses the blossoms, names her price for them, and, with here and there a compromise, gets them at the price she has named. The transaction, however, has manifestly made an inroad on her capital, for it has brought her down to her last wedding-ring.

We return laden with the spoil, which Covey carries in a huge basket balanced on his head. He asks for no assistance beyond begging of me to light the match for his pipe.

We do not go straight to quarters. Under 'Tilda's imperious direction, our path diverges to a highly fashionable thoroughfare. Our motto, of course, where she is concerned, is that of the Vizier of Haroun: "To hear is to obey." But Covey mutters beneath his load that he would be glad to know what she is up to now. In his case, however, disaffection is almost suppressed by the difficulty of utterance. There is no sufficient aperture for full-voiced treason with that weight on the head.

I should not myself be sorry to be better informed as to the reasons for visiting this district, and as to the probable duration of our stay in it. There may

be awkward meetings at any moment, and I am still to be detected at close quarters, though I wear my Jubilee disguise. At length I learn that our destination is the house of a "lidy of title," in whom, when I venture to ask her name, I recognize one of the most charming adepts of the new religion at Lady Ridler's five-o'clock for tea and praise. She is, it seems, our principal lady patroness for the dinner, and 'Tilda goes by appointment to take her final orders for the children's table. Luckily, I have no reason to believe that she ever looked my way on the day of the meeting, though, for very sufficient reasons, I often looked hers. She was exceeding fair to see.

"She 's what they calls our lady pattern," says 'Tilda, loftily, in answer to our interrogatories. "I promised 'er I 'd call this mornin' to see if there was anything else she wanted done afore she come down."

"All right; Covey and I will wait round the corner, just out of sight of the house," is my proposition, as swiftly made as swiftly accepted. 'Tilda then hastily gathers a few flowers for a votive offering, and pulls the servants' bell.

We find seclusion in the inevitable tavern, which, for all the smartness of the neighborhood, is not far to seek. Covey is disturbed at the thought of 'Tilda's mission. "Fust time in 'er life," he says, "she 's ever 'ad any truck with any of them sort of 'er own sect. If they cheek 'er, she 's sure to give it back ag'in. Why could n't she ha' sent you, mate? You 've got more o' that 'Oh-please-don't-tickle-me' way o' speakin', when yer choose to put it on."

His talk wanders away to the uses of "patterns" in the scheme of charity; and I gather from it that their services are usually too impersonal to suit his taste. "The coin 's all paid over in what they call checks now," he says; "and as for gettin' a bob out of 'em for the likes of you or me, you might as well ask a perleeceman."

Our conversation is still pleasantly discursive on this theme when 'Tilda returns, and discovers us at our potations by her sure instinct of search. She declines her proffered share, and gives us our marching orders at once.

"The Princess—the Princess o' Wyles, d' y' 'ear?—is comin' to see our lot, 'er own self, this arternoon. Buck up, you two."

There is a change in the girl, and the announcement she has just made but partly accounts for it. She is quiet and subdued—not, I think, with any feeling of annoyance or discontent, but with a kind of wonder. It is a case of "Look, how our partner 's rapt."

The procession is reformed. Covey balances his load with upturned eyes, and, as soon as he has settled into his swing, begins to seek the gratification of his legitimate curiosity.

"Well, 'ow did yer git on?"

"Oh, I got on all right. Why should n't I?"

"Thought you might ha' bin upset by the carpits on the stairs."

'Tilda (with dignity). 'T aint the fust time I 've walked on a carpit.

Covey. Still, you 've got to watch 'em. They gits under yer feet so.

'Tilda. Where else would yer 'ave 'em be? On your 'ead?

Covey. Did yer see 'er?

'Tilda. Yes; I see 'er all right.

Covey. Did she pay for the flowers?

'Tilda. Wanted to, but I mean to do this bit off my own bat.

Covey (in a kind of stupor). Why, yer don't mean to s'y—

Then we learn that the girl has refused to take a single penny, either for her service at the table or for the flowers—still with the foolish idea that "it 'll make more grub for the little lot" under her charge. She deprecates our admiring wonder with the remark: "Why, flowers don't cost nothin' if you 've got your 'ead in your shoulders when you buy 'em." This is understood to be a dismissal of the topic, but it only makes Covey more inquisitive than ever:

"Did she come down to yer in the passige, like?"

'Tilda. No; I went up.

Covey. Droring-room?

'Tilda. Dressin'-room, yer silly! You don't s'pose they waltzes about in their droring-rooms fust thing in the mornin'. (Ironically) Anythink else?

Covey. Well, yer need n't be so short. I knowed a feller as see one of their dressin'-rooms once. He was settin' a grate, with a flunky in the place all the time to see as he did n't nobble the stuff. My eye!

'Tilda (incautiously). That was n't nothin' to this 'ere dressin'-room I see this mornin'.

Covey (logically). 'Ow d' ye know?

'Tilda (breathlessly, as though losing her self-control). Solid silver, every blessed thing on the table; sometimes solid gold. Real torter-shell, real ivory, cut glass—fetch yer eye out soon as look at yer; real satten for paperin' the walls; carpits like walkin' on melted butter; lookin'-glasses all over the shop, some of 'em couple o' yards long. And there she was a-sittin' in front o' one on 'em, in a sort o' top-coat o' solid silk, with a bloomin' servant-gal a-brushin' 'er 'air for 'er an' talkin' French. There, now you 've got it; an' shut up!

I have to divine the rest, including the mystery of 'Tilda's silent and embarrassed air. For the first time in her life she has come to close quarters with a great lady in the workshop of beauty, and her own poor pride of craftsmanship in that line is abased to the dust. The wanderer from the tents of Ishmael has suddenly found her way into a Cleopatra's palace, whose majesty of ordered life and being has hitherto been but a dim tradition of the tribe. The wooden shoe has been confronted with the shoe of satin—confronted and aware.

And this experience comes when the girl is still under the influence of that determination to be a better girl by and by, by which, it may be remembered, she has previously signified her perception of loftier ideals.

Covey may spare all further question. Dull would be the imagination that on these hints could not shape out the full comedy of 'Tilda's meeting with this exquisite minister of grace. She has entered the house in her old spirit of defiance, and she has come out the more effectually humbled because of the perfect courtesy of her reception. I hear her, half reluctant, half aggressive, pull at the bell. I see her following the supercilious "Johnny in a short jacket" who answers it, "Who 's afraid?" written all over her bold bearing and her defiant eyes. Her rash and rapid judgment seems to put the whole household through test after test of supremacy, and to find them wanting. They cannot work, fight, or slang, as she estimates these aptitudes. This mood endures until she enters the presence. Then it vanishes straightway. For she has come prepared for everything except for silvery-toned civility without a taint of condescension, and for a vision of languorous beauty beside which her own outfit in this line seems but as the russet apple in competition for points with the peach. Then her humbled pride of womanhood—which, whatever its form, is always a pride of charm—flushes her cheeks as she feels that this rare being may, if she please, return scorn for scorn with overwhelming force of reprisal; may hold 'Tilda herself as cheap as she would hold 'Tilda's toilet-table, with its penny bottle of scent from the chandler's shop, against her own magnificent batteries of essences and decoctions; as she would hold 'Tilda's tongue against her own exquisite English, or 'Tilda's mind against her own storehouse

of accomplishments and knowledge of the world. On the too sudden inroad of all these alarms 'Tilda has found her spirit quite o'ercrowded. As she gazes on the delicate make of the thing before her, and stifles her awe-struck cry of "Oh, swelp me," she feels lifted into something like worship at the thought that her Creator has sometimes wrought so excellently fine. Then, gathering courage, she has in imagination touched the tender *mignonne*, fresh as from a bath of dew; has pinched the soft, firm flesh, like a savage playing with a watch-spring, and has been cowed by the triumphant issue of the test as it springs back into its perfect shape. Her overmastering curiosity of awe makes her wish that she dared kneel to fondle the silky wonder of the hair, to follow with an amazement that precludes envy the filbert line of the nails in pink and white, to beg for a dainty shoe to hang up in her parlor back in confirmation of the tradition of a godlike race. Then her eye wanders to the jewels, as they still lie loose in the strong box in a disorder which betokens the fatigue of last night's ball, and again she changes color at the thought of their vast potentialities of emancipation from the servitude of labor for "the likes of her." I see her looking down from these to her own bracelet of plated metal, and rubbing the same like some awkward Aladdin who has yet to learn the trick. And now, as the wondrous creature before her changes her native music for the softer lingo of the foreign waiting-maid, proud 'Tilda seems to bow the head in utter self-surrender to this mighty man-subduing machine, and to feel how poor

her own compensation of gifts in the power to lick the transcendent creation with one hand at catch weight.

Yet may 'Tilda have done less justice to herself. Familiarity palls; these hothouse flowers abound at every step; and after excessive orchid, one would fain see the wild rose.

It is not much like a holiday so far. 'Tilda is imperative in her demands upon our time. She has snapped us up as by press-gang,—all but Nance, who is too weak for the service,—and we have to toil for her table like slaves at the oar. We rinse the flowers, decorate the flower-pots with gold-and-silver paper, nail our flag to the wall, if not to the mast, and make ourselves handy in a thousand ways. The girls under her orders busy themselves in other parts of the work. When all is done, it is impossible to deny the justness of Covey's remark that 'Tilda's table "takes the cake."

It wins high commendation from the committee, who presently appear, and who, in their turn, are joined by the chief patroness—the masterpiece of art and nature whom 'Tilda left but an hour or two ago. She is honored in herself and as the all-potent influence to which we owe the promise of the royal visit. She offers her hand to 'Tilda, with a smile which is more expressive than words. The guests arrive.

The sight, I observe, draws tears from many eyes, and these not merely the eyes of women. In both

sexes, all ages, it is a pathetic exhibition of human waste. These are the slag of our smelting-fires of civilization; yet one cannot but feel that they might as richly repay a second visitation for ore as the dross of ancient mines. They seem to demand new and nicer processes of treatment, that is all. They look shabby, as a matter of course, but this is nothing to their want of spiritual form. There is no speculation of self-reliant manhood, womanhood, childhood, in their eyes. They seem to have had a fright of hostile social forces at birth, or before.

The desperate struggle for decency in the make-up is the most touching part of the sight. It is the clean collar, indeed, but manifestly the clean collar under difficulties.

The difficulties have been most triumphantly met at 'Tilda's table. Each girl or boy mite is accompanied by its trainer, and delivered in all attainable smartness at the scratch. The healthier and stronger hurry to their places in a tumult that gives a needful pulse to the scene. The thud of crutches here and there evokes a not ill-meant "Go it, ye cripples," from the observant Covey; but the pleasantry is not exactly to 'Tilda's taste. One infant is brought in on his stretcher-bed, and lies full length to his provender, like a Roman of old.

The almost intoxicating bill of fare is hot roast beef, vegetables, tarts and other kickshaws, with apples and oranges for dessert.

We are at the oranges, when a sense of something unwonted, fateful, going on at the door suspends the

whole festival as by a word of command. It is at first but a sound of carriage wheels, mingled with hoarse "Hoorays" and rasping cries of "Stand back." Then it grows, unmistakable in its import, as the committee and patrons hurriedly leave the hall. By general consent of murmur, "She 's come."

For the best of us, I am afraid, it is now a case of

> You meaner beauties of the night,
> That poorly satisfy our eyes
> More by your number than your light,
> You common people of the skies,
> What are you when the moon shall rise?

A clatter as of grounded arms shows that the crutches have been brought to the floor to enable the very cripples to rise. Even the recumbent Roman tries to rise with them, and is with difficulty kept in his place by the combined agencies of a stout nurse and a weak spine. So we touch miracle again, as in the ages of faith; for by the power of this transcendent presence the very halt seem to be made whole. It is a presence in white and mauve, with large and lustrous eyes which owe much of their expression of command to their perfect steadiness, and with features that defy the enemy in their firm and faultless lines; for the face seems to have perpetual youth among other attributes of the skies. There are more figures belonging to the same exalted region—a Jovian co-partner and head of the family, who beams genially upon the whole scene, but who, on this occasion, rather avoids notice; daughter princesses, erect, im-

mobile, impassive, as though waiting their turn to smile according to the privilege of their degree; secondary satellites of ladies and gentlemen in attendance, who will take up the smile, in their turn, when it has passed all the steps of the throne. But for the moment our regards, our thoughts, are fixed on the one in whose name we have been bidden to the feast. It is the dinner of the Princess, and the Princess is here.

She stands perfectly detached from her courtly background, bowing repeatedly with gentle inclinations, and at each recovery smiling approval as she takes in some line of the vista with that unflinching gaze. A glance now summons our chief patroness to her side, as though for explanations. In these there is evidently some reference to our table, for the august visitor at once determines the order of procedure by leading the way toward 'Tilda's infant brigade.

It has happened so quickly that our detachment is quite taken by surprise, and the very camp-followers are cut off without hope of escape. From my obscure position among these I see that 'Tilda is completely in the toils. She has been waving one of the infants as a flag; and the necessity of restoring him unbroken to his place has delayed her retreat, and brought her face to face with the Princess.

In an instant we have one of those crystallizations of incident that make what is called a situation. The whole room strains for sight and sound of what is going to happen. The children, and some of the old

men and women, gather round, as the Aztecs might have gathered round Cortes when they felt that at last they had before them one of the promised children of the sun. Furtive hands, some of them skinny with the age that ought to know better, stretch forth to touch the hem of the white and mauve, as though even that must have some effluence of the supernatural. The coster-"gal" and the Princess stand motionless in the center of the circle, the one so immeasurably high, the other so immeasurably humble, yet, in the view of their mother nature, perhaps with hardly a pin to choose between them in every essential attribute of womanhood.

The Princess speaks:

"What a very pretty table, and how nicely the flowers are arranged!"

'Tilda's agitation is painfully apparent to me. She is, as ever, straight as a dart; but there is a deep flush on her cheek, and her breathing is registered in the short, convulsive agitation of a little brooch of German silver which she wears on her breast.

But a gracious observation has been made, and the gracious observation demands a reply.

"Thank you, lidy. Thank you, milidy. Yes, your Majesty." Poor 'Tilda!

But really the best of us can hardly come to these things by the light of nature. 'Tilda will rally presently, I feel sure; but she is naturally a little unsteady in the first passes of this awful encounter.

The smiling end of the committee of reception, which is the one nearest to the point of courtly con-

tact, has made many attempts to intervene. It now makes another, as though to save the Princess from 'Tilda by substituting its more polished self. To its surprise—a little, perhaps, to its chagrin,—the Princess avoids the threatened rescue by a dexterous half-turn toward the coster-girl, which is equivalent to a command. She is smiling, too; but her smile is that of the only unembarrassed person in the circle, and in this connection it has the unmistakable significance of "Please leave us alone."

"And are you the kind flower-girl that arranged it all?"

"Yes, mum." 'Tilda has got it at last. If she can only stick to it, now!

"Lady Ashbury tells me that you have paid for the flowers out of your own pocket. It is so good of you."

A silence, natural enough in the circumstances. One part of its import, I begin to fear, is that it measures the immeasurableness of the social void between them, the stellar remoteness of all possible points of contact.

"It must be delightful to live in the country with the beautiful flowers."

It is a shot which, in its aim, takes no account of the economic uses of Covent Garden market, or of the fact that 'Tilda has hardly ever in her life beheld a flower growing "wholesale."

"Oh, milidy" ('Tilda, 'Tilda! make it one thing or the other), "I ain't got nothin' to do with makin' 'em grow. But 'ow should you know, milidy? 'Ow should you know?"

Perturbation of committee, which shows a disposition to push itself forward with a short account of the system of distribution in the flower trade.

"Milidy," however, is apparently a better judge of a good answer than the committee, and her fair countenance is still turned to the quarter from which the answer came. If the distance between the two women is still one of stellar spaces, it has yet been lessened by stellar spaces by 'Tilda's considerate offer of an excuse.

The press looks disconcerted. What seemed only to be an exchange of passing remarks now threatens to lengthen into an interview, and the press is distinctly out of reach.

Milidy (with a glance from the plain ring of galvanized iron on 'Tilda's left hand to the infant she has just deposited in its place). And is this pretty child yours?

'Tilda (interpreting the glance). No, milidy; I ain't a married woman. But he did so cry to have a peep at yer; and p'r'aps he may n't never see yer no more.

"Why so? I shall come often and see my poor—again and again."

"Oh, milidy, it 'u'd be like the Bible if you could come and walk down John street Saturday nights. Don't you believe 'em when they s'y the men won't mind nobody. They 'd mind you. Oh, milidy, that 's what I 'd do if I looked as though I 'd got wings under my bodice, and could talk French."

There is a headlong impetuosity in the girl's man-

ner, as though she felt she had to speak a decisive word for others, and that now or never was her chance. It is clear that, in her poor, rude way, she is pleading for her fellows, and that the dominant idea in her mind is still the wonder of this morning's experience with the fine lady, carried to finer ends. For this time she has been made to feel that woman as the man-subduer is to conquer for something higher than mere personal domination, and to use angelic powers of compulsion that proud nations may be brought under the yoke of tenderness "to them as can't fight," and may consent to put forth all their strength to make the weak and lowly happier, and the world a sweeter scene. The sense of the unsuspected fighting power of beauty and of grace, that seemed to dawn upon her when I took her to see the pictures, has been deepened by the might of living forces on this astounding day—at first by her encounter with the fairest of the "common people of the skies," and now by its culmination in this tremendous event.

Chairman of the Committee (with a warning look at 'Tilda). Ahem!

Milidy (very gently). Well, who knows? Since you wish it so mueh, perhaps I shall come to John street one day.

'Tilda (on second thoughts). Oh, no, please, milidy, you must n't never come there—leastways, Saturday nights. It 'u'd only make yer want to die. Perhaps if you was jest to s'y you would n't 'ave it,—without comin',—it might all stop. Send 'em a message, milidy, and pass a act o' Parliament. Don't

give no more dinners to us grown-ups. We 're done. But make a lor about the young 'uns. Them 's your chance. Make a lor to make their fathers and mothers send 'em to school. Make a lor to give 'em two plates o' meat a week,—never mind the oringes,—and to keep their pore little feet out o' the wet. Make a lor so as they sha'n't 'it their little sisters—leastways, when they ain't two of a size, and the gal can't spar.

The girl's voice trembles in its last accents; and, faith, it is a moving scene.

The committee have now quite given it up, and to all appearance they are engaged in mental prayer. They make miraculous recovery, however, when their precious charge, smiling no longer, but with a sigh, and a slow, penetrating look straight into the eyes of 'Tilda, shakes hands with the coster-"gal," and resumes her tour of the hall.

XXVII

NANCE has seen the doctor, and the truth is out. She is being slowly poisoned to earn her bread.

Being a local doctor, he knows these cases by heart. After one look at her, he gave a short recital of her symptoms, and told us that she was in the india-rubber line.

All is in order. She has had the faintness and the giddiness, the dyspepsia and the headache, which naphtha and carbon bisulphid, constantly inhaled, cannot fail to produce without a gross dereliction of duty. The attempt to use them as substitutes for the breath of life is invariably punished in some such way. The offender may be the most innocent and helpless being in the world.

Now we all know the meaning of a strange kind of starvation from which Nance has suffered, at intervals, for weeks. It arises from the want, not of food in the cupboard, but simply of stomach for the food on the table. A fly's ration would keep this frail creature alive, yet ofttimes she cannot get it down. The cursed naphtha fumes so pervade the general scheme of things in the factory that everything reeks of them.

The poor child brings what she calls the taste home to bed with her at night, and rises with it in the morning. It comes between her palate and all natural flavors, and gives her a loathing for the kindly fruits of the earth.

This symptom, it may be remembered, offers the clue to a principle of treatment which is the salvation of the habitual inebriate. If his vice is whisky, he has whisky sauce with everything, until he surfeits and sickens of the flavor, and turns from every faintest trace of it with invincible disgust. At breakfast it invades his coffee; at lunch, or dinner, his vegetables and his tart. And when at last he finds it in the very walnuts and the coffee, he rushes forth a total abstainer.

Nance carries her dinner to the factory and eats it there. While waiting to be eaten it absorbs the vapors of the place. Her midday meal is thus, to some extent, red herring cured in naphtha, with bread and naphtha butter, or pie and naphtha jam. But the really odd thing is that the only way to get so much as a morsel of it down is to serve it in the very room in which it has received the taint. Try to eat it outside, and the palate, revived by the fresher air, instantly rejects the nauseating dose. To make it tasteless, in fact, you must first debauch the sense of taste.

Hence, as by law of nature provided, the weakness which has made our little sister break down again and again during the festival. Hence that premature aging of her face and loss of girlish beauty which struck me so on my return.

All is in order, both in things past and in things to come. The things to come are general lassitude, mania,—paralysis or consumption as a choice of evils,—and, in due course, the end.

Nance is at mania at present—just on the verge. 'Tilda will tell how her tiny chum sometimes comes home at night cross as two sticks, and resists every attempt to cheer her like a little demon. Once, when 'Tilda was getting her to bed, the peevish mite actually smacked her big friend, and then burst into repentant tears. All the other's tender kisses could not dry them until the fretted nerves had found the relief of exhaustion.

"And shall Trelawney die?" 'Tilda answers with an emphatic "No," and straightway warns me that I must never expect to see this lamb in my factory fold again. Nance, with trembling hesitancy, throws herself out of work, and is interned in John street for rest and for such fresh air as that settlement affords. 'Tilda, at the same time, forces her wares on the reluctant dandy with redoubled energy, to find the wherewithal for the rent and for the other charges. These include a provision of simple luxuries for the table. Every day she brings something for her invalid—a bundle of asparagus, cherry ripe or strawberries lying under their leafage, as in cool grot. But I have reason to know that during the process she pawns her last remaining gold ring of stored capital. Moreover, a distant view of her hat, caught through the open window of her room, shows me that the feather has been removed, as though for hypothecation, in the last resort.

The news of the girl's breakdown spreads through the house. Though it is no uncommon occurrence, it calls forth the sympathies of many who are not in her immediate circle. The one thing that saves our set in the worst extremities is their spirit of brotherhood. They form a huge mutual help society, without rules, without meetings, but with a power of improvisation for emergencies that is truly stupendous. Thus, one neighbor brings something "tasty," though it may be but a hideous three-cornered jam-puff from the local confectioner's. Another places a donkey-barrow at the patient's disposal for airings. Holy Joe offers to put her on the free list of an electrical machine of his contrivance, with which he earns his income in the Saturday markets at the rate of a penny a shock. Covey stations himself in the yard outside her window, and feigns the thrush, the lark, and the nightingale with ever-astonishing skill. He also has in contemplation a friendly lead for her benefit, at which we are to have an entertainment, described as choice, on the easy terms of "anything you like to put in the 'at." This will include a wind-up with the gloves between Covey and a professional of budding fame. Even the somber Azrael calls, and brings port wine—still looking at the girl with an interest which, I cannot but think, is more than purely compassionate. He owns as much to me, in confidence, by confessing that she has "struck him in the eye."

I watch all this as it goes on, for a few days, with sheer delight in the spectacle of so much love and kindness on one side, and so much gentle dependence

on the other. But one of the most insidious forms of selfishness is the contemplation of heroic actions. There comes a moment when I feel that most of these measures are not exactly to the point, and that, as there is no time to lose, I must consent to some breach of the unities of my social farce, and bear a hand. An excuse for the offer of the small sum needful is easily found. I feign a legacy from a maiden aunt who kept a small general shop in the suburbs; and part of it is accepted as a loan. Nance is sent into the country, with proper securities for medical attendance and companionship in a village home. 'Tilda is to go down and see her once a week. I am to go with 'Tilda. Was ever a ha'p'orth of bank-paper so profitably laid out?

While waiting for our first excursion, I examine my factory with sharpened senses, and especially with clearer eyes. After taking so many persons round the establishment to explain the processes, I now, so to speak, take myself round to explain the effects. I see the hundreds of hands more warily as they pass the gate, and I find that all but the quite fresh caught bear traces of this terrible toil. Theirs is an industry of which every stage of every operation costs a fraction of a life. They have all sorts of "funny complaints." Their eyes smart and water as they toil in the penetrating fumes, and they weep with the mechanical facility of experienced crocodiles. They see double at times, and the vast barn-like room swims round them as though its pots, brushes, garments, stuffs, and furnace-fires of gas-jet were all but so much ruin in a whirlpool. Sometimes, as I learn in answer to

inquiries, they "ketch it in the lungs." They invariably, as we have seen, "ketch it in the knob," in the form of bilious headache. The moral effects are even more distressing. They lose their temper for nothing, and will find scope and verge enough for quarrel on a pin's point. Some have been known to go "right off their chump," and to be exceedingly rude to the overseers.

The law is supposed to have an eye on us. Old antic! it would be truer to say that we have an eye on him. His inspectors show no offensive disposition to intrude. His magistrates are exceedingly considerate; and when they are not, we threaten them with the stoppage of an important industry. It is our business to send in periodical returns of our killed and wounded. The other side make it theirs to accept our figures without question. "Live and let live" is the motto as between us and our administrative masters, if not exactly between us and our white slaves. And, Lord, Lord! how we can lie for the good of trade!

Our factory, in truth, is a great spoiler of humanity, and especially of the weaker vessel. It seems to have the same destructive appetite for the latter as some monsters of fable. Their youth and freshness is but raw material; we turn them out as hags in no time—the manufactured article. Alas for their fleeting show of white and red!

> Her cheeks are like the blushing cloud
> That beautifies Aurora's face,
> Or like the silver crimson shroud
> That Phœbus' smiling looks doth grace.

Her lips are like two budded roses
  Whom ranks of lilies neighbor nigh,
Within whose bounds she balm inclosed
  Apt to entice a deity.

With Orient pearl, with ruby red,
  With marble white, with sapphire blue,
Her body every way is fed,
  Yet soft in touch and sweet in view.

Nature herself her shape admires;
  The gods are wounded in her sight;
And Love forsakes his heavenly fires,
  And at her eyes his brand doth light.

Ah, the pity of things marred—blossoms trampled by the hoofs of swine, girlhood cheated of its day! Some of them, like Nance, bear it in silence, feeling that it is the price of "keeping respectable." Some snatch their beauty, so to speak, out of the fire, and hurry with it to market for what it may still fetch as damaged ware. Others coöperate with the spoiler in his rage for results, and make for the dram-shop, as though they cannot keep their nails from their own flesh. What do I not see, what do I not hear, when once conscience is roused from its torpor of use and wont!

The circumstances being such, judge of the feelings with which I open my paper, one morning, and find a whole sheet devoted to the advertisement of our great Union for the Rubber Trades. It is out at last. And at the head of the directorate, who but Sir Marmaduke Ridler, Bart., C. B., M. P., till this moment our great unknown? Surely he is of those who rule our spirits

from their urns. There is no escaping him. A few formalities, and we shall be his, with the whole British public, in so far as it joins in the demand for rubber goods. He is in everything—land, houses, inventions, industries. He has discovered the law by which every single activity of the race can be made to yield a bare subsistence to the toilers, and a fortune to him. It is now a mere trick of the hand, and he will undertake to produce the fortune as readily as the conjurer produces the ace. If he gave his mind to it, I believe he could make even poetry pay.

The union is to pool the interests of all the rival and competing firms, and to command the market. I observe that among those who have sent in their adhesion are one or two that are known to waste money in experiments in sanitation beyond the meager requirements of the law. The great combine threatens their very existence, and they are about to yield.

From another page I learn that all society is on the tiptoe of expectation for the great Jubilee ball, and that Sir Marmaduke will be of the distinguished company.

The paragraph is opportune. I have myself been favored with an invitation to the entertainment, which has duly reached me through the faithful Stubbs. I was about to decline it, since it threatened to deprive me of more congenial society for two or three days. But now "The Case is Altered," to quote the sign of the house at which Covey and I take our evening draft. I feel that I cannot afford to refuse. No

single occasion should be lost for the study of Sir Marmaduke Ridler's life and times. I must see about the costume at once. A prophet of doom?—say wild Amos, dresser of sycamore-trees, who saw what must come of low life above stairs, and who was much given to the analysis of social grandeur into its chief component of wronged orphans' tears. Tut, tut! The duke might not like it. A sansculotte? Too realistic. Egmont, as a sort of king of the beggars? Too smart. Piers the Plowman? That may do.

Sir Marmaduke, I see, is to go as a crusader, armed cap-a-pie, for the conquest of the sepulcher of his Lord.

XXVIII

DAY in the country to see Nance, a day for 'Tilda and me. Happily, it is a day of rest for feather and felt. A neat sailor hat suffices this time. The choice of costume, I think, has not been altogether determined by circumstances. As part of her heroic determination to behave more like a "lidy," 'Tilda has consciously toned down. She is almost in her working-clothes as to cut and texture, and she looks more than ever like a Greek girl in an apron. "My buff shoes with the p'inted toes," though dressy, are acceptable to the most fastidious taste for rustic use. My own make-up, I am afraid, is still that of a linen-draper who has seen better days. Stubbs has not packed my John street bag with discretion. The billycock and the lounge-jacket are, I think, my strong point. But, beyond all question, I fade off into uncertainty toward the knees.

We have not far to go. Within fifty minutes or so of our move from the starting-point we are in the heart of the country. We reach a rural station; we climb a hill; we come to a table-land of broad roadway, shaded by trees. The sunlight steals through the

foliage, and—look how even the floor of earth is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold! We are flecked with the glory as we sit down to rest on a prostrate trunk.

'Tilda is childishly happy. She has too assiduously sold flowers to know much of the places where they grow. Covent Garden market is her halting speculation in search of a first cause. The lawless blooms in the hedges, the very roses in the wayside gardens, almost scandalize her as creatures that have broken bounds. Her delight offers them a divided duty. As a dealer, she is disposed to regret a wanton waste of twopenny buttonholes. As a human being, she has an emotion which is closely akin to religious awe. Knowing John street, she wonders nobody steals 'em o' nights.

"There 's a whole tanner's worth for nix," she says, as with deft fingers she makes me a giant buttonhole from the wild growths. I look rather too much like a coachman at a wedding for my own private taste; but may I perish of ridicule ere I complain.

Poor 'Tilda! The "country" she has hitherto known is but some gin-palace in the fields at Easter or Whitsuntide—a scene of revelry beside which, in the comparison, a fuddle of Dutch boors looks like a garden-party at old Versailles.

"It 's like a cimet'ry," she murmurs, as though to mark her sense of the perfect peace.

We stroll on to new beauties—a village, which she instantly reconciles to experience as something out of a play, and which in truth, though perfectly real, does

seem just a little too bright and good for every-day uses. But as the villagers are so obliging as to take it entirely as a matter of course, further wonder would soon bear the taint of affectation. The little three-cornered green is bordered by old cottages and immemorial trees. The children in their white aprons play about like specks of dancing light. Aged persons sit on an aged bench—both entirely free from self-consciousness. Other persons draw water from a well with the same captivating air of doing nothing out of the common. Ah, the goodness of God!

"*I* don't want no bloomin' swings," says 'Tilda, still in the same tone of happy reverie.

I think I know what she means. The quiet is an excellent substitute of the fun for the fair. We sit down for a moment, silent as on a peak in Darien.

The four-mile radius, after all, is not the planet, and in the main the world is still a quiet scene. Man, too, is really a peaceful ruminant, content, if you will insure him his provender, not to soar above the earth on which he moves at a cow's pace. The geniuses who are forever inviting him to higher flights, without setting the example, are but gadflies, whose contemptible triumph is to make him squirm in his pastures, and who generally catch it heavily, in the long run, from an iron tail.

Think of our orb's vast mileage of silence and repose. Take train from a terminus in any bear-garden, and in a few minutes you have left all the uproar behind, and are among earthy sons of the earth, weighed down to it by its deposits on their

iron-shod boots. You may run for thirty, forty, fifty miles, and hardly see a soul but the stragglers at the stations. Beyond, all is calm—green field, grazing cattle, silent frith, plantation in which there is no sound but the restful chatter of the birds. The stray cottage is the true type of the human dwelling-place, with the smoke of the chimney curling in leisured journey to the hush of the clouds. And the type of the earth-dweller is the slow-witted fellow with his one idea a year, or a lifetime. That feverish hectic of the boulevard whose boast was a new idea every day was but a monster of the species. The plowman, the carter, the laborer, these are the majority. The town is but the rubbish-heap of the plains of peace, and a part of the secret service of their amenities. The map of the world, to those who know how to look at it, is as soothing in its suggestion of that which passeth understanding as a landscape of Corot or of Claude. Even in peopled Europe, what range for the quietist, and how slight the supposed usurpation of the crowd! The self-centered undergrowth, and the communicative trees, whose gossip is but a more delicious mode of rest, have most of it to themselves. There is much calm on the Danube as it seeks the landlocked sea; for the Eastern question is but a buzz of trouble at its journey's end, and most other questions are mere polemics of barn-door fowl along its mighty course. How comfortably may one doze in Spain, in the snug valleys between the spurs of the Apennines, in the French and German cities of the second and third class! The fiords have been fast asleep from the

beginning of the world—just turning with a snort, perhaps, as the pirate galleys passed out to carry the noisy minority away, or as the excursion steamer passed in with their descendants, who, after all, are but midges vainly threatening the stillness of ocean pools. As for Asia, Africa, America, in their huge preponderance of mute forest and wandering tribe, why labor the point? 'T is a very sedate world, of a surety, with fauna and flora to match both it and the natural cravings of man.

Now we saunter on to a fillet of limpid water which calls itself a river on the maps. The girl drops on her knees by the bank, not to pray by the book, but just to feast her eyes on the fishes, with a ravishment of the sense which is prayer, in its way. Her remark that they are "all alive, and no mistake," is, I take it, a reflection on the truthfulness of the hawker's cry. Aquariums and globes of goldfish apart, I honestly believe she sees them for the first time in their native element. Her cries are infantine in their expression of simple wonder and delight. "Look, there 's a big 'un! See 'im land that young 'un one in the ribs? Ain't he cock o' the walk! Twig the two little 'uns comin' up to lam 'im? Go it, Tom Thumb! give 'im beans. I 'll 'old yer coat!"

Then, as if ashamed of bringing a suggestion of fistic war into paradise, she rises, straightens herself, and once more begins to "behave."

And here by the brookside is Nance's cottage, and there in the porch is Nance herself, signaling to us with her handkerchief. The cries of the two girls at

sight of each other are in the same perfect keeping with the scene as the twittering of the birds. The sick one is in kindly tending; a glance shows that. There is a glow on her cheek which may be due to the pleasurable excitement, but which, I hope, is the effect of the fresh air. As I see her so, it seems a far cry to hell.

We display our presents. The simple dainty, warranted free from naphtha, is premature; even yet the poor child does not care to eat. The pink bow is put on at once, and its reflection serves to arrest the flight of color from the face. The blue eyes are still bright with joy. It must be another sign of returning health. Trelawney shall not die.

She nestles up to 'Tilda in the old way. "Now, dear, I must show you round, and then we 'll all come back and 'ave tea. So 'appy, so 'appy now!" With these words, she lays her hand on my shoulder and offers me a kiss.

'Tilda is at first for keeping her imprisoned in the garden. But Nance insists on the walk, with something of her old fretfulness. She is used to it, and she has put off her airing this afternoon to wait for us. Away we go, then, and by keeping our thoughts firmly fixed on the passing moment, we go as three of the happiest persons alive. The invalid walks with perfect ease, though slowly. But who could want to hurry here? Our stroll is the natural pace, the pace of early herdsmen. It may have been quickened for love, as when the messenger ran to meet Rebekah; but it was perhaps never quickened for greed until her progeny invented High Change.

We pass the gabled house, the seat of the great family till a whole acre of building grew too small for their state. They die elsewhere now, but they still keep up the sense of home by coming here for the final rest. Their monuments have long outgrown the chancel of the village church. The architects have come to the rescue with a chapel of ease which is all tombs.

Nance calls a halt in the churchyard. "Ain't it a sweet plyce? So tidy. Would n't you like to be—? I come 'ere every d'y."

Happily, 'Tilda is out of hearing. As I look at the poor girl, something makes me wish that I had been so, too.

We return for the meal, which is neatly served by the cottager in an arbor at the end of the garden. All sit down, even 'Tilda, finally; but she is at first so disturbed by the thought of being waited on that she insists on helping to lay the things. Nance looks a flower of girlhood, though a fading one, in her new frock, and with mere decency and comfort in the surroundings. One could fain curse the brutish dullness that finds no better use for such growths than has hitherto been found for her. She is the gentlest and most thoughtful of hostesses. And ah, how little separates her in essentials from the smartest and the best bred!—the cockney aspirate, the cockney vowel, a tendency to eat jam with a knife.

We have a most affectionate leave-taking between the girls. Coxcomb as I am, I believe Nance would like to kiss me again. I know I should like to kiss

her. We both refrain for fear of misunderstanding on the part of the cottager, the Mrs. Grundy of our rural scene. 'Tilda still would urge it but for her quickened sense of the social proprieties. She has been a model of behavior so far, and is evidently fired with the ambition of bringing the day to a triumphant close.

She and I walk back to the station in the cool of the evening. Peace and beauty, beauty and peace, again and again. Kine low for the milkmaid, laborers turn their backs on the day's toil, their faces to the night's rest; children romp their way home to bed.

What could strike the jarring note but a cursed cockney out of bounds? And here, alas! are three of the breed, hulking shop-boys, displayed on an ale-bench by the roadside. Oh, that they may refrain from the "chi-hike"! Oh, that we may take no notice, if they don't! I see the danger, and dread the effect of the strain on 'Tilda's new-built bulwark of self-control.

Alas, it comes! "What price flowers ter-d'y?" The fiend has fixed with unerring eye my one decorative mistake, the nosegay worn as a buttonhole.

Poor 'Tilda changes color, but gives no sign. We draw nearer and nearer to them. What is to be done? I try a covering movement, which consists of talking with the rapidity of complete absorption in my theme.

"Yes, 'Tilda; this place has been just as you see it for perhaps a hundred and fifty years; the big house for, I dare say, three hundred or more; the tiny river

winding in and out among the meadows for perhaps a thou—"

"Why can't yer leave the gal alone?"

'Tilda (under her breath). Oh, my Gawd!

First Cockney. Oh, you rude man! I'll tell mother; see if I don't!

Second Cockney (in raucous imitation of a feminine scream). 'Elp! 'Elp!

It is a prophetic cry. Before my restraining hand can reach her, 'Tilda has plucked him from his seat, a mortal in the grasp of goddess Enyo, waster of cities, and administered to him "one between the eyes" so fair and so true that he forthwith drops out of the reckoning. It is not a pleasant business, but we are in for it. The two are up in an instant; and as both have a healthy shame of raising their hands against the girl, they chivalrously turn their attention to me. I have not done anything of this sort for years; but, happily, I have sat at good men's feasts. The two together are poor creatures. Before 'Tilda can repeat her indiscretion, there is but one upright, and the fight is o'er.

"'Tilda, you 're a disappointment."

I seize her arm and lead her away. She yields without a word, and we soon regain the quiet of the road and the privacy of a hedge-row; then she bursts into the first tears I have ever seen fall from her rebellious eyes since she wept over the waif in the yard.

"Oh, I 'm no good for a lidy, I ain't! Oh, why did n't yer ketch me when I was a kid?"

It is so infinitely touching in its despair that all

XXIX

BRIEF wait in our play of shifting scenes, and now I stand, with a host of courtly supers, in marble halls.

We mount a great staircase, step by step, to pay our respects to a queen of the East who, as hostess, keeps her state on the upper landing.

It is the night of the great fancy-dress ball for the Jubilee.

I dressed at chambers. The deceased maiden aunt has covered the cheat by accounting for my absence from John street for a few days, during which I am understood to be on a visit to a county solicitor for the settlement of family affairs. The play, in so far as it concerns the factory, is played out. I have sent in my resignation as porter at hell gate.

Stubbs was ready for me, and his services were welcome as ever. But I was less elate this time on my return to the old life. I can hardly say why. I felt inclined to ask myself why I was there. Last time it was all the other way—why was I ever at John street? Stubbs is still a blessing. He had me travestied, and packed in the brougham, to the minute. I was another man, if not a new one. My own

brother might not have known me in my fifteenth-century rig.

That file of carriages—we knew where it was to end, but where did it begin? It seemed to dislocate the whole traffic of town. Our pace was funereal. The populace stared at us with only less interest than they stare at convoys of the dead. We, with affected detachment from mundane interests, stared at the new moon.

For all that, I was presently aware of Holy Joe standing at the corner of a square, evidently with the fatuous hope of doing a little business with the skies. What a hope for a night like this! He carried the tripod; Low Covey bore the telescope in its waterproof case, shouldered like a gun. It is the one clear night of the year on which there is no business of that sort to be done. The earth-bound throng has no eyes for the vault of heaven just now. That is the reason, I should say, why Joe, with his positive genius for missing the main chance, came out. He looked sad and sour. Covey seemed undisturbed, as though knowing that, whatever the issue for his principal, it would yield for himself the price of a pint of beer. He made critical observations on the company—perhaps to cheer his companion. His "What do yer think o' that for a bit o' muslin?" betokened youth and beauty in the carriage which had just passed.

My sober costume and the darkness of the vehicle enabled me to escape unrecognized, though not exactly unobserved. His remark, "All in this lot, tuppence," was, I take it, a sign that I belonged to a category of

objects of minor interest unworthy of the notice of a connoisseur. There were many halts, and as many jolts that marked the attempts of the horse to achieve the rudiments of a trot in a course of three yards. But we passed the portal of the great house at last, and left the sweating pavement for the Elysian Fields. Farewell, drab world!

The stately hall is almost a conservatory, with its plants and flowers bathed in the soft light. No appeal to the finer sense is wanting. A band plays from its hiding-place in a thicket of most luxuriant growths. Once more it is life as it should be—the life of the children of fire. I imagine that when we have brought it to this point for the whole human race, the happy swarm will aspire just a little too near the center, and go out in glory, like moths in the flame of a dip.

As we make our obeisance to the lords of the revel, the chamberlains take us in charge. The groups representing whole epochs of history are packed, for a subsequent procession, in a great chamber of white and gold, the walls paneled in yellow brocade and hung with old masters. We who are not in the processional groups—"All in this lot, tuppence"—are told to pass on through the rooms.

Now it is the green drawing-room, the blue, the pink, each a perfect scheme in stuffs and in timber dear bought and far fetched. Then it is the garden beyond, with poor Joe's moon quite snuffed out by the electric beam, which seems to turn every giant growth into a pear-tree bearing fruit of fire. The low musical talk and laughter are as orchestral effects; and for

their bass, still in perfect keeping, we have the distant turmoil of Piccadilly,—crowd, carriages, and police,—subdued to harmony as a beat of sullen waves. The great tent on the lawn, wherein presently we are to sup,—blue and yellow without, and within all braveries of tapestry and of table-service,—suggests a state pavilion of the Sophy camped for glittering war. Yet, the whole scene, of still life and of quick, is at present but a confusion of isolated splendors, and it fails to tell us what it is all about. It seems to await the touch that may bring it together into the unity of a general idea.

A well-known strain that announces the arrival of the royal party brings us back into the house. Enter the Prince and Princess, attended. We offer homage to a grand master of the Knights of Malta in black velvet set off with sparkling steel; to a Margaret of Valois radiant in white and gold, in crown of diamonds throbbing with light, and in ropes of pearl. Each of these illustrious persons is attended by others of scarcely inferior state—some of the blood royal. These, again, in their train-bearers and supporters, are the nuclei of only minor glories. If you could descend in imagination to the very threshold of nothingness (on the other side of the wall), you might complete the perspective of the social order, with Low Covey at last.

The supreme figures take their places on a dais, and the defile begins. Now the whole inner meaning of it is clear. It is the pageant of the bosses of recorded time. All who have held the world in the hollow of

the hand in all that the world most prizes—acres, wealth, and power—have come to keep Walpurgis revel with those who hold it now. It is their one night's leave from the shades, and they make the most of it.

Here is Sheba—no mean hand at storing the fatness of the land, since, as we know by writings, she could spare talents of gold by the hundred, and precious stones, to pay her footing in a king's house. Her train is stiff with brilliants and with the metal of Ophir. Five black pages and as many white can hardly hold it up. She is gorgeous in purple and gold-shot gauze, in gems of all the colors of the mine. When there is no more room on her fair body for portable property of this description, the chains of diamond and turquoise are slung on either arm, from shoulder to wrist. This was how they did things nigh three thousand years ago; and where, if you please, is the boasted progress of to-day? For, as we know,—also by writings,—with all her magnificence, she came to her friend's house but as the country mouse to the mouse of town. When she saw how lavishly that house was ordered, "there was no more spirit in her." Her royal friend still kept up the due proportion between the center of things and the circumference, and was able to put her in her place.

And here is great Egypt, in scarcely inferior state. Her form, but for her counteracting pride of port, might bend beneath the weight of her necklets, bracelets, anklets, of inestimable worth. Thus the laborer is still worthy of his hire, even when his labor is to

bring kingdoms to the devil. The asp was evidently but her solace of vanity, not her refuge of despair. By dissolving a few of these pearls at the pawnbroker's, as occasion served, she might have lived in exceedingly comfortable circumstances to the remotest limit of age.

The Arthurian group, with the sheen of their trappings, light up the dark saying of their chronicler that good knights come to them who are mighty of goods. Mme. Vivien, I rejoice to see, though she sports but antique copper for the circlets of her white arms, has for other ornaments the market price of many a flower of chivalry. Peace be with her and with her company. They bring us the comfortable tidings that they were not always engaged in the social purity movement, or in affairs of state. There is a time for all things, and this is a night out.

The great Venetians bear much the same message. If the resplendent rig of the doges does not mean that republics, rightly understood and rightly managed, are no killjoys of social sport, it means nothing at all.

The spacious skirts of great Elizabeth mark the culmination. Their embossments bear the value of many a rich province, and of whole caracks charged with the beef and beer for the want of which her seamen had to fight the Spaniard on rations of wind. Royal daughter of a royal sire, who spent our store to build fifty palaces, whims of the hour! Raleigh, Sidney, Essex, Leicester, Drake, and Burleigh gleam in her wake, the gravest of the sly rogues, no doubt,

well in the secret of the conspiracy to tie our common man to the soil and make him their bondman forever.

Russian Catherine is hard by, in an imposing structure of orange velvet, ermine, and white satin, and with a train of items whose barbaric pomp threatens to pale the luster of the rest of the show. The great Austrian empress follows; and, with the sixteenth Louis, the line stretches out to a crack of doom. A Cromwell and a Napoleon reassure us as to revolutions. Such things mean no more harm than the republics to which they sometimes give birth. The coach is soon running in the old ruts. For the rest, sprinkle with Astartes, Theodoras, Pompadours, and you are still in the spirit of the matchless scene.

The whole is power, power, power, howsoever it is won, howsoever it is wielded—power for its own sake. A poor little Dantean Beatrice, who has lost her way among us, is ridiculously out of place. The well-groomed Furies, torch in hand, and kindly beyond the shallow significance of Athenian compliment, show that Tartarus bears us no ill will. It soothes with a sense of the permanence of things, and of the vanity of the stock warning about the crusts of volcanoes. Volcanoes are extremely habitable parts of the earth. Ask the peasant of Vesuvius. When you hear a rumbling, you look out for the lava, and, at need, shift to the other side of the hill.

While reflecting on this great truth over a cigarette in the lounge, I feel a touch on the shoulder, and, turning, behold Seton, my lad of gold.

"You never came to that supper. There was reproach in your empty chair."

"Urgent private affairs. But give a sinner one more chance next time."

He has had the wonderful judgment to attend this riot of opulence quite unadorned. He wears a close-fitting suit of fawn, which sets off his neat muscular shape to advantage, and makes him one of the most striking figures in the throng.

"Have you met the governor? To tell the truth, I 've come here to get out of his way. His lot are a bit fierce—crusaders, you know. That sort of toggery wants putting on."

In the very act of making this undutiful speech he changes color, as a band of warriors, obviously from Palestine, enter the recess and call for cooling drinks.

Caught! They lay aside their steel head-pieces, and Sir Marmaduke stands revealed, with two or three of the most influential members of the Rubber Union as his companions in arms.

"Hallo, young 'un!" cries the delighted sire. "Seen your mother? She 's Queen Berengaria. Who may you be?"

"Oh, it 's an attempt at the Black Prince in his tennis-suit, sir."

"A prince! well, that 's all right, so far. But why did n't you get some of your mother's jewels? She has n't got half of 'em on."

"And who are you yourself, Ridler, if it comes to that?" asks a squat figure attired as Rouge Dragon.

"Godfrey of Bullion, my boy; I believe that 's the idea."

"That 's a rum start. Why, there 's another in the show."

"Can't help it. There 's three Queens of Sheba. I 'm the real article."

As ever, sure in his intuitions, even in his blunders. His travesty skips the poor social failure of a Walter the Penniless to strike in when the men of worship, who have the command of the market, take the lead.

"But what 's the matter with your blazon, old chap?" inquires the squat person, who threatens to become troublesome. "You 've got metal upon metal, pig upon bacon. That 's wrong, surely."

"I dunno, and I don't care. Had it all worked out at Heralds' College. No expense spared. Besides, can't have too much metal, I should think, if you ask me, so long as it 's the right sort."

"Hope they 've got me all right," says another of the band, uneasily, adjusting the spectacles which he draws from an unsuspected pocket, to survey his portly figure in the glass. "I 'm Baldwin, Count o' Flanders, so I 'm told."

"Where did he come in?" inquires Sir Marmaduke.

"Ah, there you licks me. Nathan did my little lot. That 's all I know."

"Queen Berengaria, I think you said, sir?" observes Seton, as he passes his father and quietly slips out.

"Oh, you 'll do," is the soothing assurance of our amateur pursuivant, whose reading seems to have been wide, if not deep, for the occasion. "Your man

waited till the Crusades were a goin' concern. Never got to Palestine at all, but collared another concession on his way out."

"He got left in the right place," observes a somewhat youthful William Penn, who has the precision of the American utterance. "That 's the main point."

Sir Marmaduke waves an introduction, and we make acquaintance. The courtly Quaker, it appears, has heard of me through his sister—the fair cousin of all of us, who came over to learn to be a marchioness under the tutelage of the noble family at Brentmoor.

"Your sister is settled in England now, I hear."

"Yes, sir, and happy as the day is long. She is here to-night as Princess Bonaparte-Patterson. She was a great success in the same character at our Bradley-Martin ball in New York."

"That was a fine show," says Sir Marmaduke. "But you had some trouble about it with the radicals, had n't you?"

"Nothing to speak of. Some popularity-hunting parson began preaching about the luxury and waste; then the papers chimed in, and our push suddenly found we were monsters, when all we wanted was to have a dance."

"It was a devil of a dance, though, I 'm told," observes the pursuivant; "almost as good as this."

"Sir, it was a good dance. The Waldorf Hotel was elegant. I never saw such a show of flowers in my life. We 're a young country; all we ask is time. But there 's one thing in which I think we could give

annoyance vanishes in an instant, to give place to an intense pity for my poor Pocahontas of the slums. She seems so bruised and broken by the wayside of her short cut to the higher life.

"Well, 'Tilda, let 's make the best of it. Leave yourself alone, and be yourself—just in the old way."

"Ah! and have everybody what 's better look as if they would n't touch me with a pair of tongs.

"Oh!" (wringing her hands, and, the form apart, with accents worthy of classic tragedy). "I wish I could sling my 'ook; I wish I could sling my 'ook. I can't speak proper. I can't be'ave proper. I ain't no good. I stands in the gutter, I do; I can't git out."

Her humiliation seems to be deepened by a sense of the fact that she cannot even "cry proper." She takes her knuckles out of her eyes, and draws forth a pocket-handkerchief that is distinctly behind-time.

"Have patience, 'Tilda—patience with yourself. Let people help you, and it 'll all come right."

She looks up, and flashes revolt through her tears.

"I ain't a-goin' to no Flower Gals' Mission—not me!"

"No mission, 'Tilda, just a friend, that 's all."

"Friend! Do you think I dunno what you are? You 're a toff. I knowed it pretty nigh ever since you come back. I can tell it when you 're speakin'—most when you 're tryin' to speak like us. You don't even 'old yer tongue same way as we do. Nobody can't upset yer by sayin' a rude thing. I thought you might ha' bin in the drapery at fust, but I don't think so now. You 're a toff, stone broke—that 's what you

are. That was on'y yer last maiden aunt, that Judy wot left yer the bit o' brass the other d'y to bring Nance 'ere. You blued many another maiden aunt at the races afore you come down to your knuckle-bone. You 've blued everythink, 'cept the gold what 's in yer 'art. When I see what you done for Nance, you made me feel I was like dirt. I ain't no class for you. I never can be. Oh, why did n't yer ketch me when I was a kid?"

She pauses, but I take care to leave her to herself.

"I warn't made right at the start. I was a bit o' slop-work. So was Covey. That 's why we both got to 'ang together on the same peg. That 's jest what 's the matter with all on us in John street. We can't do no good with ourselves now. We wants pickin' all to pieces; and if you begin that, you 'll only tear the stuff. Give the young 'uns a chance in their cradles, an' let the old 'uns die off; then you 'll see a change. All these missions tryin' to make us mealy-mouthed!"

"Missions, 'Tilda!"

"Oh, I don't mean you. But you know what you are," she continues, with a still more embarrassing certainty of touch; "you 're only a toff 'avin' a lark. It won't be a lark forever, though. It makes yer larf, like, to 'ear us talkin', and to see our funny w'ys. But some time you 'll see us jest as we are. Then you 'll git the 'ump, an' cuss the d'y you tried to mike a lidy out of a fightin' flower-gal."

"Hurry up, 'Tilda, or we shall miss the train. I want to treat you and Covey to the Mogul."

you points already: we won't stand any nonsense about the poor. You should have seen how they piled up the agony when they wanted to stop that ball. Fifty thousand persons kept alive on rations in Chicago! Poverty and vice of New York! Blind Man's Alley, Hell's Kitchen, Sebastopol, and the Bandits' Roost! We just let it all roll by, and gave all the bounders that preached it the dinky-dink. They do think they 're such awfully warm babies, that lot. We meant going to that ball, if we drove over dead bodies. We were ready, but the corpses were not. It all passed off as quietly as this."

"Let 's see; how do you stand in millionaires now?" asks Sir Marmaduke.

"We 've topped the four thousand, sir," says the Quaker, with modest pride.

"In dollars or in pounds?"

"Well, perhaps only in dollars. But some of our citizens have got a good way over the line, and would, I assure you, make a very respectable show, even if you divided them by five."

"I know it," says Sir Marmaduke, with something of the bitterness of extorted admiration. "You 'll beat us at last. You don't bleed the rich as they do here. Shockin', the way they pile it on with the taxes. We 're always tryin' to pull our millionaires up by the roots. You leave yours to grow. Oh, you 're bound to win; and the radicals 'll have themselves to thank for it when the mischief 's done."

"Sir, there was a high moral purpose in that ball," says the Quaker. "Our people want ideals. We tried

to give them an ideal by showing their unity with the past. I never beheld anything finer in my life than our 'Ball-room at Old Versailles.' Some good judges thought it beat the real thing."

An Australian, costumed as a pastoralist of the patriarchal age, chimes in: "You Americans have done well enough in the world, God knows, since you parted company with the old country. But I 've sometimes thought you made a mistake in not keeping hold of a corner of the apron-string, after all. The connection 's a wonderful help for the decorative part of the business—handles to your name, and what not. Believe me, the opening of one of our sessions of the legislature is a pretty sight. What strikes me so in the States is that you seem at your wit's end to find an excuse for a bit of gold lace. You give yourselves such everlasting trouble to keep up the artificial difference—equality. All civilized societies mean the same thing—a fair field to every man to make his fortune, and keep the losers in their place. Why can't we all do it?"

"Dash it," cries Sir Marmaduke, still sore with his grievance, "that 's just what we want over here. We can't get the fair field. Do you call it a fair field when you 've a Dangerous Trades Committee barking at a man's heels every time he tries to carry on his own business in his own way?"

His mail gauntlet clangs disgust as he throws it on the marble table by way of preparation for a draft of whisky and soda. "I 'm working up a little affair of my own just now," he continues, "but I 'm not sure

I shall be able to pull it off. The faddists are on the scent. They want me to doctor my gals as if it was a blessed sanitorium. It ain't a sanitorium; it 's a concern for makin' money. Patent ventilators for the rooms! Six hundred cubic feet of air to each worker! Who the devil are they, to have their breath measured out to 'em like their milk? Lids for the naphtha-cans! Automatic machines for this, no young person under sixteen for that! Sir, they 're playin' up Old Harry with the enterprise of the country. If I 'd thought of it, I 'd ha' come to this show as an awful warning—the 'Last of the Millionaires.'"

"When do you expect to get out of town this year?" asks Baldwin, Count of Flanders, as though to change the subject of a sorrow that lies too deep for tears. "And what 's your pitch?"

"Engadine, as usual, and as soon as I 've got the Union launched. The House of Commons begins to choke me after June."

The conversation is interrupted by the reappearance of Seton, this time as a sort of understudy of the part of a messenger of the gods.

"There 's no time for dancing the separate sets, sir, and you 're wanted for an 'All Ages and Nations Quadrille.'"

We hurry to the ball-room just in time to see a William the Conqueror joining hands with Lady Ridler, a St. Louis with the American heiress. The musicians nerve themselves for a crowning effort; the dance begins. It is at its height when, suddenly, to my appalled gaze, but to no other, there appears, right

in the midst of the figure, a vision of Nance stretched on her dying bed, with a light in her eyes which is not of this world. It is no vision of fancy, but a sheer objective presence. I see her exactly as I see them. She is there as plainly as the other shapes, only they are not aware, for there is no break in the order of their movement, no intermission of laugh or jest. At length, in the mad gallop of the finale, they all stand clear of their dread copartner; and Egypt, Athens, Rome, feudal England, and free America foot it in the veritable dance of Death of the Ages, round the body of a labor slave. It is my last glimpse of the Jubilee.

Then, after glancing at my watch, I walk out in the dawn, to change at chambers, on my way to John street, knowing perfectly well what news I am going to hear.

XXX

MY first footfall on the landing, as I reach my floor, brings Covey to the door of his room.

"Bad news, mate."

"I know it. Nance died this morning, just before break of day."

"You knowed it! 'Ow?"

"Never mind."

"Why, 'Tilda sent me up fust train to bring you word!"

His story, in so far as he is able to tell it, is soon told. On the very night of my leaving John street, they had a message to say that Nance's cold had taken a sudden turn. 'Tilda and Covey set off together; and there they stayed till the end, not knowing how to communicate with me.

I hurry back with Covey to find 'Tilda; and, between her and the doctor, I soon learn the rest.

Nance's cold was nothing in itself, everything in the patient's state. There was no power of resistance in the enfeebled frame. The organic trouble of old standing in the lungs might have been kept at bay for years if the system had had any recuperative power.

"The vitality was gone," says the doctor, "gone through persistent slow poisoning. She has been as surely poisoned as if she had taken a dose. I know the place where she worked. We had hundreds of cases from there at Guy's in my student days. It 's a murder trap, warranted to kill if you give it half a chance. I had my doubts about her when she came down, but I never knew where she made her living till this morning. She came here, or rather she got away from there, weeks too late. There was nothing to work on for recovery. It 's pneumonia now, if I had to give it a name for a certificate. But it would be sheer poisoning in small doses, if I had to lecture on it as a hospital case."

"Why not give it its right name everywhere?"

"Because the law won't stand any nonsense about first causes. Half the certificates we write are mere anodynes for the public conscience. Most of the factory work for girls is simply murderous. They 're not built for it. See them at the book-folding, the body swaying to and fro in one mechanical action, repeated thousands of times in the day, with a regularity of friction that would wear out a cast-iron shape. The whole conditions are false. It 's the pace that kills; and without the pace how are they to compete with the machinery? The other element of success in the competition is wretched pay. The too much work and the too little pay are both logical consequences. If they worked gently, they could n't do enough. If they were paid well, the labor would be too dear. The poor pay means poor grub. You 've no idea of

the muck they eat. Nothing in it to repair the waste and keep body and soul together. When, on the top of all this, you get the poison thrown in, what are you to do? If there 's no actual poison, it 's called a healthy trade. The factory air, the factory dirt, the factory stenches, found in all the trades, don't come into the reckoning."

It was a tragic death, for it was the death of a dot, a speck of humanity, an item of no account. Nance's Maker owed Nance nothing, and kept up the stern refusal to recognize any semblance of a claim to the last. Both girls had to fight it out on their faint remembrance of the teaching of the Sunday-school, and, for the rest, on the natural religion of the slums —the hard gospel of the reign of supreme irresponsible powers in this world and in the next, and the weakest to the wall. Thousands of Nance's class have no other, in spite of the liberal provision offered to them by missionary effort. Both these girls were orphaned at an early age; and for years they had no relatives within reach, and hardly any within knowledge. From the first they had to rough-hew their scheme of a divine government of the world as they went on. The difference between them in the supreme hour was that Nance's intuitions were those of her character and her physical prostration; 'Tilda's, those of her greater strength of body and mind. In each case it was but paganism pure and simple, crossed by vague traditions of the Christian scheme.

With the dying girl, as the awful clouds gathered about her, it was the abjectness of sheer physical

misery—the sense that the house of the body was a house falling in on all sides.

With this, there was the terror of the unknown, unexperienced anguish that might yet be to come, inspired by fragmentary recollections of old teachings of God as Judge, of eternities of torment still physical in their nature.

This was rendered only more exquisite by attempted propitiations of confession, as though a midge sought to make a clean breast of it in regard to the infirmities of midge life. These poor consolations soon yielded to the sense that tremendous powers, pitiless, unmoral, working out a law of their own, have us in their grip, and will deal with us according to that law. So the engine-room of an ocean liner would deal with one who had toppled over into its pulverizing order of wheel and piston working at their full speed.

And ever yet, in contrast with the sense of that little, vague, and half-unknown "naughtiness" of wrong done, the sense of that mighty, yet still vague and unknown, wrath of retribution—the fear that death was going to "hurt," now and hereafter, the wonder why the irresponsible and unresponsive powers could not let "poor little me" alone.

Oh, if only she might really die, really cease to be for good and all, and have done with the miseries of an uncertain event!

Then the fierce and desperate grasp of the certainties in hand—love for 'Tilda, trust in 'Tilda, 'Tilda good enough for her, the nearest thing to protecting power within her ken.

The wonder whether she would meet mates and friends who had gone before—Sally and Tom, and the sister that died as a little child. How could she hope for any encounter of love, friendship, or kinship in that immeasurable void?

The sense of the world spinning, spinning away from her, as the final hour drew nigh. Not she was leaving the world; the world was leaving her for its appointed tracks in space, while the wind of its mighty rush sang in her ears "down the ringing grooves of change," and all its warmth of life and light faded off into the infinite, while she shivered alone in the cold and dark.

Then, at the last, the peace of sheer quiescence without trust. The game was up. Struggle how futile! Fear how futile! Be still and yield. It is the rapids, with the fall in sight through a break in the black sky.

The grip on 'Tilda's palm as she balanced on the edge of the green water, and saw the boiling foam beyond.

Blood trickling from 'Tilda's palm, where the nail had entered the flesh, when all was done.

XXXI

NANCE'S fate seems to rouse John street from its apathy of indifference to its own lot; but, to its credit, it is still more sorry for her than for itself. Now that she is gone, we find that everybody liked her or loved her, in his own way. Every room finds its moral in the event. The very thieves in the cellar argue that, since this is honest industry, it is better to go on picking pockets. The prevalent feeling is by no means 'Tilda's awe-struck submission to forces of evil beyond her ken. It is rather a helpless rage.

Azrael would like to rouse it to a cry for vengeance. His white wrath seems to glare through the whole building. He is at us night after night in the preaching-shed. Naught will serve him but the dissolution of a society in which such things can come to pass.

All else has been tried, even the passionate revolt of the barricade, and it has been found wanting. There is nothing for his seeking in the thin, critical methods of the philosophers of socialism—nothing in the smug literature of the humanities. The poets and the book-making crew at large bring no help. They pretend to

take the place of the priests as teachers, interpreters, oracles, and they are even as the old gang. Nance is but a touch for their new season's patterns in rhetoric brought out every spring and fall—the shading for their Pindaric odes on the shows of life. Art has nothing to say for Nance but in the same way. She is a mere studio property, and her complement is a duchess giving doles. Philosophy itself has ratted, with the German madman who offers a text for the doctrine of the abasement of the weak. All disdain her the one crying evil of the world. They have become hierarchies of place and power; they have made their peace with the spoiler; and they will simper with the best pluralist of the earlier dispensation, as they wait in file for their chance of a call to the feast. Helpers these!

And the stone of the mission systems offered for bread—he will have none of that. Talk of giving the Pentateuch to a Zulu, or the Trinity to a Chinese! What is this to the mockery of ministrations of piety to Nance, paid for with Sir Marmaduke's alms? Salvation by blood and fire?—such fire as burns on the altars of the headquarters staff! Warfare against Satan-pat-a-tra! Satan is but Sir Marmaduke's whipping-boy; and much either of them minds it while these pygmies lay on!

I listen to him, in spite of 'Tilda's ever-increasing horror of the hiss of his voice, of his mask of hate. His speech stops at nothing, not even at an arraignment of the highest of the accepted creeds. No omnipotence or omniscience, this one, but only

another sort of human being, made in our own image, and doing a doubtful best.

It is the gospel of the wretch in a hurry. The pace of the coral insect in slow-moving organic change, how utterly hopeless! What agony in the thought of the centuries quietly working your life contribution in grains of lime into the pavement of the new paradise! Now! Now!

He is a doctrine passing through the medium of a temperament, and the temperament a furnace of elemental passions. His own sufferings as a revolutionist have searched out the weakest parts of his nature—hate and envy, the craving for revenge. He is sincere in his faith of democracy; but that faith, like others, touches only some through pity, through love, through the grace of self-sacrifice. To others it appeals through their yearning to see their fellows smart where they have smarted, to "pay back" and to cry quits with the answering pang. He is consumed with the sense of social injustice, and he waits his great revenge. To be fair to him, he thinks it is no revenge for his own scar, but only for the wounds of the mass. He is capable of sublimities of self-denial for the comrades of his sect. He hates by categories; he retaliates by categories; yet he is never so much himself as when he glories in the thought that self has been left out of the reckoning. His law of life is the law of the eye for an eye, but he has lost his consciousness of its true nature by giving it an altruistic end. He is a well of science; he knows everything but the human heart; and, for want of that knowledge, all

his thinking processes fade off into the logic of Cloud Cuckoo Land. His simple plan is to frighten society into a capitulation by steadily blowing it into the air. In one word, his sense of the inhumanity of man to man has made him a greater monster than the worst.

He attends the funeral uninvited, leads his ragged regiment past the grave in the country churchyard, harangues under his red flag, writhes in and out of our peaceful umbrage like another serpent of Eden.

When all is over, he calls a mighty meeting in John street, to 'Tilda's unspeakable disgust. If anything could revive the Amazon in her just now, it would be the desire to suppress him with the arm of flesh. But Nance's death has done for her what nothing else could have done. She stands passive and uncomplaining—paralyzed for all violence by the wind of the blow that has struck her mate.

For all that, she implores us to take her to his infernal assembly. It is the council of pandemonium, without the decorum of the rules of the House. It reveals the hate of the sections against one another, as well as their hate of society. The blacks of anarchy scream their rage against the reds of Social Democracy as sneaking poltroons who have gone the mile or twain, but shrink from the journey's end.

The resolutions are carried as by tooth and claw. They fight over points of procedure, not for the sake of the points, but for the sake of the fight. They maim and mutilate each other's speeches with discordant yells. Finally, they do the same office on each other's persons as they battle for the possession

of the platform. The Social Democrats are hurled from the empyrean of their trestled elevation to the abyss of the floor, and the seats of the mighty are in the keeping of Azrael and his crew. One's heart sickens at the whole business. It is the delirium of plague-stricken wretches tearing each other on their beds of pain. Azrael fulminates with foaming mouth against the Maker that made him, and the society that nursed. 'Tilda listens, her eyes glazed with horror, her hands clasped in Covey's and mine.

In another moment she is suddenly wrenched from us by a rush of surging maniacs. The lights are turned out; and when one feeble jet is relit, the girl is no longer to be seen. The meeting has broken to pieces in hideous riot. Azrael is gone.

She is not in her room; she is not in the house. Something has happened—is happening while the moments run to waste. Impossible to doubt the nature of it after what has passed. Azrael has some desperate venture afoot, and 'Tilda, divining it, has gone to step between him and his prey.

To find Azrael, then, is to find 'Tilda. I rush to his room, where '48 holds watch and ward. The miserable creature repeats a tale evidently learned by rote. Azrael's movements are none of his business. I waste precious time in urging him to amend it by every kind of appeal to his pity and his greed. At length I seize him by the windpipe, and choke and beat the truth out of his lying throat. Azrael has gone to Sir Marmaduke's, who this very night holds high revel with the choicest spirits of his band. I ask for no more.

I know perfectly well what he carries. The laboratory table is enough, with its litter of fulminates and acids and miscellaneous gear of the arsenal of anarchy. His luggage is a bomb.

I jump into a cab, telling the man to drive for his life—jump out of it again to mend the pace, and run, run, till I near the house. But before I reach it a loud report rends the air, and I stop at last, only to see this: 'Tilda stretched dead and warm, and with the martyr's smile on her white face turned to the sky.

Beside her, about her, lie the fragments of the murderer, with a rent in his side big enough to sink a ship. There is another rent in the low wall that separates the garden from the street. A conservatory beyond, which almost touches the wall, is a smoking ruin; and glimpsed through the smoke is a dining-room in hideous confusion, as host and guests stand petrified in the attitudes in which they have risen to their feet.

The scene tells its own tale. The wretch tried to scale the wall so as to plant his charge against the house. The girl closed with him, and dragged him back. But in the struggle the bomb exploded and did its work, alike on the guilty and the innocent. It was the bad husbandry of her heroic nature. A thousand Sir Marmadukes, with all their spawn and all their following, were as dust in the balance against this one life.

This, then, was the dark decree. 'Tilda was to die with Nance—both victims, the one to the curse of the disease, the other to the curse of the remedy.

EPILOGUE

A MONTH has passed. It is still summer, but the summer's pride is not what it was when I began.

Where so good a place to think out the meaning of it all, for that final report to the governor, as by this brookside where poor 'Tilda knelt knee-deep in flowers on a never-to-be-forgotten day?

As restful this for meditation on "all the wealth of this world, and all the woe both," as any summit of the Malvern Hills.

The Malvern Hills!

As I lie musing, I know not how, I am gradually aware of the presence of one who dreamed on those hills the moral of a whole life spent as in awe-struck wonder, terror, pity, and rage at the madness of the life about him. He saw the poor becoming ever poorer, the rich ever richer, a priesthood without the faith of deeds, a religion that was no longer a lamp to the feet. He died as he had lived, still wondering, still bearing his testimony of poet and seer against a regimen of lies. This was his work. He was Chaucer's teacher, and a greater than Chaucer, though he sang less sweet, by reason that passion marred the

evenness of his note. Though a learned clerk, he was content to earn his crust by odd jobs in the Westminster courts. That done, he returned to his true business, the exposure of the folly of the world's wisdom, and the squalor of its pomp. Yet he lived in an age of glory and of conquest which took stock of itself in a year of jubilee as complacently as we do now. Rapt in this way, the gaunt somnambulist strode through the London streets, "woe-weary and wet-shod," and sometimes in search of pot-luck. Ever busy with his haunting vision of the better and the worse, he saluted no man on his path, least of all the rich and proud, nor deigned to say "God save you" to the haughty sergeants of the law who might have put many a meal's victuals in his way. His sole refreshment of spirit, and that, perhaps, a purely imaginative one, was to lay himself down, from time to time, on the cool grass of his native hills, and dream at his ease. Here he seemed to receive precious visitation of a simple lad from the plow, who might finally set things straight by bringing men back to honesty, nature, and sheer beauty of human relations. The thoughts from which he never could escape were, in the material domain, the fruits of the earth to all the sons of the earth; in the spiritual, reason and conscience as the guides of the self-directed soul. The books in which he set them down had the perilous fascination of light. The clerks read him, the people learned him by heart. John Ball could not forbear to quote in public, and got himself drawn, hung, and quartered for his pains.

No. 5 John Street

The majestic figure says not a word, but simply looks down at me; and, under the compulsion of its gaze, I begin to write my report. It is not what I want to say. It is only what I have to say. But the shape is inexorable:

Time, sir, seems to count for nothing in human experience. Five hundred years, or thereabouts, have passed since our last great warning, and we are still busy with a profitless struggle to live without a valid religion. For want of such religion in both the murderers, two women have just died of murder under my very eyes. The Ridlers (for whom, and others, please see Appendix) are but Azrael living from greed as a first principle, as the Azraels are but Ridlers living from hate and revenge.

It is as though we had all been wafted to the most tragicomic of new planets. We have seen planets of this sort in fancy, wherein the inhabitants have to live from a single organ, say a stomach, with the most grotesque effect.

The single organ on which we attempt the experiment is the idea of each for himself. With all the glorious freedom of choice in ideals in this glorious world, we have given our preference to one called the pursuit of wealth. Under this scheme, as man of worship, we have Beast Ridler, a dragon beside which the monster of Wagnerian opera is but a toy. We are all in the same boat; for the irony of it is that, although you begin your testimony as an indictment, it is sure to end as a confession. For myself, I plead invincible ignorance, as, I have no doubt, the rest may do. I never began to suspect my share of the iniquity till I went to No. 5.

A Ridler in his claim upon life is as pitiless of those who minister to his odious cravings as any Nero or Caligula. His pleasures are bought by pangs as effectually as if the pangs were the end and aim. He makes for misery as by a law, yet he is our most cherished institution, and a crown of things. He has become instinctive, automatic, inconscient—the last and worst

sign of all. He is of those most helpless of all wrong-doers who know not what they do.

Only think of the melancholy implications of anguish that lie in his name as it stands in the share-list! Sweet old ladies, with no power to trace the dividend to its source in human woe, take stock in Ridler, and lead lives of private virtue and philanthropic effort on his proceeds. They are as innocent of all critique of conscience in the matter as a pike who swallows a fellow-creature for his morning meal. Their stock-broker has advised them that Ridler is a good thing; their anointed priest, so conscientiously busy with his thurible and his altar-cloths, has said nothing to the contrary. Ridler turns Nance's bones into gold; he pays his covenanted percentage of the spoil, and we quietly pocket it without one single thought of the ethical considerations involved in the reckoning. It is there, and that is enough, like the peach in the market, or the sunlight that gave its bloom to the fruit. This is the awful automatic evil, the new Pandora's box that works as by an invested penny in the slot. The sanctified Cowper, the mild and ministrant Unwin, heed not, for want of thought, and go on cultivating literature and the finer feelings on a little manslaughter to the end of their exemplary lives. They stir the fire, wheel the sofa round, and fill the blameless cup on incomes drawn from the torture-chamber and the sty. If chance had not thrown me in the way of Nance, for certain I should have stood in with Ridler. Why strain at a gnat, when one has comfortably digested the camel of an entire income which bears this taint?

Beauty armed for conquest—what dire significance, not only for its familiar contrasts of suggestion in furs skinned alive from the beast, and feathers plucked quick from the wing. The very money that buys these braveries is often minted, after a fashion, from living things of our own species, each one thrown aside, a broken life, when it has yielded its grain of ore. A hundred Nances, mayhap, have died to make one day's triumph for a queen of Hurlingham or a queen of the Row; and, to the seeing eye, their ghosts attend her in her pride. "Israel does not know, my people do not consider"—that is all. Strange that

morals should have given the benefit of its proclamation of neutrality to money-making, which, as the fiercest of all the lusts of appetite, needs the strongest curb.

Raw material from start to finish! Only think of it, from the slave-gangs in the tropics driven to their death for it in its natural state, to little Nance at home, perishing so gamely and so idly for the manufactured article. A factor with a whip at one end of the prospect; at the other, Ridler with a pay-sheet which has all the properties of an impulsive thong. What a scene when the black ghosts and the white ghosts meet at the point of junction between time and eternity, and find that they were all in a fellowship of iniquity suffered and iniquity done.

And all so needless, even for gain. The swamps might be as gardens, the factories as halls of Hygeia, if we would only make up our minds to give Nance and the niggers a little of their due. "What, out of our money?" Our money! Though we began at this moment paying back to them what we have misappropriated during the ages from their share of the partnership, we could never complete our twenty shillings in the pound of restitution in a thousand years.

Here would I fain stop. But the imperious shape is still irresistible in its demand for the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; and I have to go on:

So we may extend our empire till it eats up the planet; it will be no cure for this sore of selfishness at its heart. Empire as much as you please, of course, since it is our destiny. But let the higher peoples conquer the lower only to lead them up to light and life, and never draw the sword against a neighbor's fetish until they feel full sure they have got rid of their own. The idea of conquest solely for the better provision of one's own dinner wants but a touch to make it as disgusting as a cannibal feast. We cannot give better than we have, and we must search our hearts deeply to feel sure that we are equal to the high mission of putting others to death for their own good. What a boon for

the native our economic system as it stands! Socialize the very imperial idea. Conquer only to bring the conquered into the family, and to give them their equal place at the board—a board with no boss at the head, but only with a carver whose duty it is to see that all are served. While Rome did that, after her fashion, Rome prospered. When she ceased to do it, and began to sleep on the full stomach stuffed with her neighbor's share, she died. Carnage may be God's daughter, but let her take care to kill for God.

The innermost truth of John street, then, is for the democracy, after all. Where is John street's religion? Where are its priests? —not the coped and stoled variety, who are capable of dooming a whole social order with a text, but the real spirit-wrestlers who struggle for a new blessing with the God within. John street suffers because it is simply Bond street in all but the luck. The strange thing is that not one of the sufferers has chanced on the secret of his cure—serve yourself through serving others, and never put the cart before the horse. As it is, set the glass to your eye and look into the John street cheese, and you will see a perfect commonwealth of oppressors and oppressed as idly active as the other community outside.

'48 as a leader, where can he lead for want of head? Azrael as a leader, where can he lead for want of the finer spiritual sense, without which everything is still nothing? And as the led, the beer-swelling crew beneath them, who are but an organized appetite, and whose elective affinities are as those of midges crossing in the air! Nothing can be done with them until they "get religion." While waiting for it they are worse than the idolaters it is their business to supplant.

It is now, I am afraid, but a mere "take it and be hanged to you," so far as the poor governor in council was concerned, and I write on:

So, again, there must come to men the appointed one—not yet, alas! in sight—who will show them by his shining example what the religion is to be. We may only guess at his message,

but surely it will be the purified conscience as the Word of God, nor more nor less, and never a line of text. Then saints, hierarchies, and choirs celestial will seem but poets' playthings. Taken seriously, they have given us the whole of that unhappy fakir tribe who are capable of thinking of their Maker to the total exclusion of the thing he has made. Will not the appointed one bid us leave that Maker—Jehovah, God, or Lord, First Cause, or Universal Soul—to contemplations of his own nature more within the measure of his own powers, and listen merely for the voice of him in the purified breast, especially for the undertones in which the sweetness of its message lies? Then when, haply, the voice says charity, in its larger rendering of love, brotherhood, self-sacrifice, obey it, and leave the metaphysics of the question to take care of itself. Above all, without waiting for any behest, burn the later fathers, as the madman's housekeeper burned his books. So will come the great change, and democracy will step forth armed and equipped for its conquest of the world. The old mystery of regeneration is true as ever as a principle, in spite of its fantastic setting in the creeds of the hour. Democracy must get rid of the natural man of each for himself, and have a new birth into the spiritual man, the ideal self of each for all. This is its great lesson. The monstrous heresy of self-worship, self-absorption, whether as capitalist, artist, bonze, or mere greedy fellow with storage for one and an appetite for two, is the essentially irreligious idea.

The struggle for this renaissance, constantly renewed, is the most persistent note of all the great religions. They have failed only when they have been diverted from it. The very reproach that the thing is not natural is a sign that it is right. Man's work in life is to turn himself from the raw product into a piece of fine art. The Nike of Samothrace in the natural state is but a lump of clay.

Literature must have a part in it, for the true business of literature is the new forces which are shaping man to democracy. Art must have a part in it. It will be a change in the entire orientation of the human spirit.

Nothing but a church will do. All the other schemes of de-

mocracy have come to naught for want of that. The lecture platform is no substitute for Sinai. Democracy is a religion, or nothing, with its doctrine, its form, its ritual, its ceremonies, its cenobites, its government as a church—above all, its organized sacrifice of the altar, the sacrifice of self. This is the deepest craving of human nature. All attempts to reconcile man's heroism to his interests have ever failed. His goodness must make him smart.

Such a church, while waiting for its lawgiver, may have its modest beginnings in any two or three who are gathered together with the resolve that they will stand side by side, alike in weal as in woe, and that they will not covet their neighbor's bread. They may so gather with the comforting assurance that the world itself will not be big enough to hold them in their great day.

As a mere economic formula, democracy must ever fade off into Bellamy visions of a glorified Poughkeepsie with superior drains. The underground system of the human being is the thing that we must first set right. A mere nagging negation will never serve. Without religion, how is man, the essentially religious animal, to face the most tremendous of all problems—social justice? Religion—Guyau's natural internal energy for good coming straight from the fount of all being and translating itself into action by its own exuberance of vitality—is his breath of life. Such progress as he has made has ever been in accordance with such religions as he has had. Poor as they may have been, they have been adequate in their hour, and this science moves by experiment, like the rest. What is most essential in it is what has least changed. Love, justice, brotherhood, ever the voice has whispered these, or proclaimed them in trumpet tones. Only the systems are the things that have their day.

Our heaven of the accepted convention bears too much of the taint of its origin as a plan for underpinning earthly thrones. The very high souls want pulling down from their pride of place. That celestial House of Lords with its ticketed seats on the steps of the dais! Where do the others come in? New heavens, a new earth!

So is there no escape from the iron law of brotherhood. All

solutions but this have had their trial, and all have failed. Never was their failure more awfully conspicuous than it is to-day, when nine tenths of mankind still live as brutes in regard to all that makes life worth living, while the other tenth rots in character with the infirmities of plethora and excess. Ring out the old, ring in the new, the great moral renaissance, the new learning of the mind and the heart, the new types of man and woman developed by liberty working within the domain of love and law.

Never did that austere regard relieve me of its terrors till this was written and despatched. The irrevocable step had been taken; naught remained but the bitterness of the reflection that I had been robbed, as with the strong hand, of thoughts that belonged to the privacy of my own soul. Such thoughts, no doubt, are often in other souls, and with nobody the wiser, even the holder, so coyly respectful are we of the recesses of our own nature. Pondering, with dismay, the effect of the rash disclosure on our island worshipers of the old order, I was about to formulate a hearty curse on my spiritual Paul Pry. But at that moment of crisis, "Oh, how glad I waked, to find this but a dream!" and to feel myself at liberty to supply its place with an ode and a bundle of Jubilee papers.

In due course I had an acknowledgment of the receipt of the reports from my employer, the governor of the island. It was a long communication, and I give it only in its salient passages:

YOUNG MAN: All safe to hand with inclosures, some of them short in postage, but that can be made good in the account. We thank you kindly for the trouble you have taken. We send you

something about our celebration (see copy-book inclosed, for which there will be no charge). We had three services and a foot-race, and fired a gun. I preached morning and evening. I am sorry we have no one who can draw pictures of these things. It was a fine sight, especially when I proposed the health of her Majesty in cocoanut milk. You know our rule about intoxicating drink. . . .

Your reports were laid before the council as soon as they came to hand. They were greatly admired, especially for the handwriting. We reckon John Quintal our best for penmanship here; but he is not your equal in capitals. If you could send us out a few boxes of the nibs you use, it would be greatly appreciated.

We should have been glad to hear what the Queen really thought about our loyal and dutiful address. We had some sort of a reply, but it did n't seem hearty. I see from the papers there were other addresses to attend to. So all in good time.

Did she mind me not coming over? . . .

We feel greatly improved by what you say about your merchant princes sucking up all the wealth, and then raining it back again in fertilizing showers according to their judgment. We are going to try that. To tell you the truth, I did try it once on my own account, but made a mess of it for want of practice. I began by storing up three times as many goats and vegetables as I needed for my own use. They all went bad,—the goats particularly so, for want of exercise,—and the man who I got 'em of at a bargain passed a very hard winter for lack of food. He had too little, and I had too much, you see, which was foolish.

I am bound to tell you we can't quite make out about people sometimes dying of starvation in your country. What do you mean? The only case of that sort we ever had came from lockjaw, and we are not a millionth part as rich as you. You can't have lockjaw to that extent. As for starving for want of food, how can that be when all the world sends all its best things to you, and pretty nigh all the ships in it are carrying 'em over day and night? Our idea is that you must waste your victuals a good deal.

Also, about those dinners given to over a hundred thousand of the poor—not for compliment like, as we sometimes feast a friend, but because they was really griped. Do you know what a hundred thousand means, young man? Take a sheet of paper and work it out in single strokes. And that in one city—not all over. Why, you must have got muddled in your oughts! We had a pretty lively debate about this in the council, I can tell you, and the proposition was carried by four to two to what the schoolmaster calls refer it back.

Besides, how can you have so many people hungry, when you 've got so many others ready to form companies? Companies, as we understand it, is for providin' things. We should have liked to hear something about the way you set about making them. We are always ready to introduce improvements, and we might try something of the kind here. Who 's that Sir Marmaduke Ridler we hear so much about in the papers? We can't quite make him out. Does he do it for love, as the sayin' goes? He seems a good, kind man. I wonder if he likes guava jelly. We could send him some. . . .

I was delighted with what you sent us about the review of the fleet. Some says we ought to have a fleet of our own, so as to be more like you, and go and take other people's islands. But I don't hold with it. It would be a dreadful responsibility. We might n't be able to make them happy when we 'd got them, and then we should be ashamed to look one another in the face. . . .

Then—you don't mind my speakin' out—we can't understand how you can reconcile it to your conscience as a moral nation to treat your rich people so bad. It looks as though they 've got to overdo themselves to give the others a chance of getting anything at all. We seem to hear of nothing but their rushin' about here and there, orderin' all sorts of things they can't possibly want, just for what you call the good of trade. You 've no right to lay such fearful burdens on any of your fellow-creatures. . . .

We don't quite see our way to all that money spent on fads in religion—for that 's about what it comes to. I can't help fancyin'

that in your religion there 's a good deal of what one of them money articles I read the other day calls waterin' the stock. There 's so much altar-cloth, altar-plate, and things as don't belong to the real workin' plant goes into it, that you can't hope to get a fair dividend on your actual capital of holiness. That 's the way it strikes me, speakin' as a little child. . . .

We don't at all hold with that scheme of the "Orb as Cash," and wish you had n't sent it over. It made some of us feel bad. . . .

What I 've been comin' to, after all, but it 's just as hard to face it now as when I begun, is that in the matter of accounts the council has not behaved quite so distinguished as I should like. You forgot to send in your bill; but, as I explained to them, we was pledged under our great seal that anything in the nature of legitimate expenses within the limits of a pound sterling should be made good. Not that we have a coin of that kind in the place, except the one in the museum. Our currency is yams. They 're delicious eatin', and I wanted to send you a full sack by way of settlement—as they say, "free of all demands." But, by the council's vote, I 've got to forward you only half a sack on account, the remittance to be completed on the revision of your report herewith returned.

N. B.—If you could tell me how that system of rainin' back is to be managed without the others sometimes dyin' of thirst while they 're waitin' for the showers, I should feel very much obliged. I 'd go so far even as to send another quarter of a sack of produce by return, leaving only a quarter outstandin' to balance the account. To get the full flavor, please bake in a slow oven, and serve hot with a mossel of butter.

We want to know everything, we 're so eager to get on; so please tell us all you can. To be quite plain with you, I hope you are not keepin' anythin' back. One ill-natured member of council went so far as to say that you would n't let out all you knew under another sack. I told him that a young man of your standing was quite above suspicion. And I may just mention in confidence that we can't go a step farther in yams.

Happy the dreamer, though, for all that, to whom it is sometimes given to learn a final secret without the inconvenience of dying! Yet such the awakening to the sense of life, toil, purpose, the depression of failure, that one could fain send in one's resignation as a human being ere the vision fades.